



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

# Official Committee Hansard

JOINT COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS

**Reference: Construction of mixed residential dwellings, block 87, section 24,  
Stirling, ACT**

FRIDAY, 18 AUGUST 2000

CANBERRA

BY AUTHORITY OF THE PARLIAMENT

**JOINT COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS**

**Friday, 18 August 2000**

**Members:** Mrs Moylan (*Chair*), Mrs Crosio (*Vice-Chair*), Senators Calvert, Ferguson and Murphy and Mr Forrest, Mr Hollis, Mr Lindsay and Mr Ripoll

**Senators and members in attendance:** Senator Murphy and Mr Forrest, Mr Lindsay and Mr Ripoll

**Terms of reference for the inquiry:**

Construction of mixed residential dwellings, block 87, section 24, Stirling, ACT.

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**Committee met at 10.48 a.m.**

**CHAIR**—Ladies and gentlemen, I welcome you all and declare open this public hearing into the proposed construction of mixed residential dwellings at block 87, section 24, Stirling, ACT. The project was referred to the Public Works Committee on 29 June 2000 for consideration and report to the parliament by the House of Representatives. 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—

- (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 received a briefing and inspected the site of the proposed work. During this public hearing the committee will hear evidence from Ted Quinlan, MLA, Mr Simon Corbell, MLA, the Defence Housing Authority, the Western Creek Community Council and Ms Michelle Holmes and Mr Peter Anderson.

**CORBELL, Mr Simon, Shadow Minister for Planning and Land Management, ACT Government**

**QUINLAN, Mr Ted, Deputy Leader of the Opposition, ACT Government**

**CHAIR**—Welcome and thank you for being with us this morning. We have received a submission from you dated 15 August 2000. Do you propose any amendments to that submission?

**Mr Quinlan**—That submission is now a little dated given the news that we received this morning in relation to the redesign of the road around the new estate and the probable establishment of roundabouts at either end of the estate as it faces Streeton Drive. Overall, we submitted to this committee, and this appeared today. In the interest of the residents of the Weston Creek area—

**CHAIR**—Could we deal with any amendments first. I understand how you might have amended that submission, but do you have any formal amendment?

**Mr Quinlan**—No.

**CHAIR**—It is proposed that the submission dated 15 August be received, taken as read and incorporated in the transcript of evidence. There being no objection, it is so ordered. I now invite both of you to make a short statement supporting your submission and then we will proceed to questions.

**Mr Quinlan**—The submission is somewhat dated in that part of the concern we had in relation to this estate was the impact upon Streeton Drive and what we had previously seen as intended traffic management devices within that road which we thought would probably exacerbate problems within Streeton Drive and the area generally rather than fix any problems that might arise out of the establishment of the estate. We have now, on the tour this morning, received advice that there is strong consideration for a different configuration, including roundabouts at either end of the estate as it faces Streeton Drive. I understand from my discussions with the Weston Creek community council that that is one of the options they had considered putting forward anyway. They have undertaken consideration consultation processes. I think that is a major step forward.

In the general sense we think the establishment of this estate is a very good thing for Weston Creek. Demographically, Weston Creek will probably be the oldest area on an age per capita basis in the next year or so within the ACT. This represents a fillip to the area and possibly the salvation of some of the facilities that exist in Weston Creek which are under utilised, particularly primary schools and the local shopping areas. Ensuring the viability of those areas will naturally benefit the residents of the estate once it is established. We think it is an excellent project from the perspective of Weston Creek as an area. Obviously there will be an impact on residents living across the way from the estate. We have made representations. I have certainly met with DHA on a personal basis and with the Weston Creek community council and the Australian Defence College hierarchy.

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We would like to think that every consideration will be taken to ameliorate the impact upon the residents of Streeton Drive that are immediately impacted by the establishment of this. Many of them would have purchased residences and even blocks of land in that area many years ago in the reasonable expectation that they were going to live indefinitely across the road from parkland. They now find that it is possible that the establishment of this estate will change the amenity and the outlook of the place where they live permanently, and in fact will cause increased traffic flow and the problems that may be associated with that. We are now appealing for the maximum consideration to be given to the visage of the estate and how it presents itself to the existing residents.

In relation to traffic, we do not claim to be traffic engineers, and in our small Legislative Assembly we do not have much access to be able to call upon that sort of expertise, but we do consider that the re-evaluation of proposals within Streeton Drive to ensure that it does work and continues to operate and not clag up is a good thing. It reduces considerably the reservations that we have. It should be noted that not far from this estate there is the Arawang Netball Centre which is a surprisingly busy centre over the weekend and, even at the current stage, Streeton Drive in this area can be almost gridlocked as parents park their cars and as players park their cars there, as there is a considerable degree of pick up and drop off. There is a considerable amount of rear-end parking and slow movement in the street, and additional traffic could well exacerbate that. Had there not been a rethink in terms of what was to happen with Streeton Drive, we would have been asking that, combined with the establishment of this estate, there should be an increase in the off-street car parking in relation to the netball centre. With the design that is now up there with the roundabout, we still believe that Streeton Drive has a problem. It may well now be the problem is more a problem of the ACT government as opposed to being directly associated with the establishment of this particular estate, but we will be pushing for increased off-street parking anyway.

**CHAIR**—Thank you. Mr Corbell, do you have an opening statement?

**Mr Corbell**—Just briefly. Mr Quinlan has covered most of the points that I share concerns with. We certainly welcome the change that has been proposed in relation to traffic management. The roundabouts option was one that we identified in our submission to you and we certainly see that as far preferable to the previous arrangement where a series of traffic islands and, indeed, an additional lane at one section of the street were proposed. We certainly saw that as quite an awkward option, and this one is far preferable.

The only other comment I would like to make is simply to reinforce that we welcome the proposal in the light of the changing nature of the Weston Creek area generally. As to the development of the estate, whilst it is not welcomed, indeed, by all residents in the area, we certainly recognise that a decision about land use for the area where the estate is proposed had already been made by the ACT government some time ago. Whilst this perhaps highlights some of the problems that local residents have in understanding and getting access to information about land use zonings in their area, that is something which has been resolved, that this development is consistent with that land use. Those are the only additional comments I wish to make.

**CHAIR**—Thank you. The committee will now put their questions.

**Senator MURPHY**—I have one question in regard to land issues in Canberra. What is your understanding of land availability throughout the Canberra region?

**Mr Corbell**—Land availability in the Canberra region is very tight at the moment. The market in Canberra for new residential properties and rental properties is extremely tight. The rental market in Canberra at the moment has a vacancy rate of less than one per cent. Certainly the proposal by DHA endeavours to address that by ensuring that DHA would be able to develop an estate at a price which was more economical than if it had simply gone into the private land market.

**Senator MURPHY**—What are the employment opportunities in the Weston Creek area, in particular for spouses of Defence personnel?

**Mr Corbell**—Weston Creek is a reasonably central area of the city and, therefore, not only the group centre at Cooleman Court but also the town centre at Woden and Civic itself are all within easy access. Weston Creek, whilst once at the edge of the city, is now very much a more central location, so there is a range of opportunities at various employment centres and particularly at those centres I have just mentioned.

**Senator MURPHY**—Would the same apply to an area like Ngunnawal or Nicholls?

**Mr Corbell**—The opportunities for employment in the Gungahlin area are extremely limited. Gungahlin, as a new town centre, has very limited employment opportunities within the town centre itself, unless you are working at the local supermarket or at one of the small number of retail outlets in the Gungahlin town centre. Most people in Gungahlin have to leave Gungahlin every day to work somewhere else. Most people who live in Gungahlin would travel to the city or, indeed, to the Barton central area to work.

**Senator MURPHY**—What about if it was at Jerrabomberra?

**Mr Corbell**—Again, you would see that most people would travel into one or another area of Canberra to work.

**Senator MURPHY**—And Tuggeranong?

**Mr Corbell**—Tuggeranong has more employment opportunities than Gungahlin but there are only around 10,000 people, if I recall correctly, working in the Tuggeranong town centre. That is out of a total population of around 90,000 residents. Again, most people in Tuggeranong do leave Tuggeranong every morning to work in another part of the city.

**Senator MURPHY**—In terms of the population of Weston Creek, how many of those travel?

**Mr Corbell**—Most people in Weston Creek would leave Weston Creek to work somewhere else.

**Senator MURPHY**—I think they would. Thank you.

**CHAIR**—In your submission you have recommended something that I do not think you have spoken to. In fact, time or circumstances may have passed us. You recommended that there should be an access road parallel to Streeton Drive.

**Mr Quinlan**—We virtually said that we were not traffic engineers but we thought intuitively that the initial plan that we saw would not work. We would ask that consideration be given to either the proposal that is now on the plan behind you or, at the ideal stage, a service road parallel to Streeton Drive which would feed to something like those roundabouts anyway but would also allow for the possibility of maximum landscaping between the new estate and the existing residences on the other side. Those are the people who are paying in loss of amenity for this development.

**CHAIR**—For my own information, does the ACT government have a traffic management department?

**Mr Corbell**—Yes. It is an area within the Department of Urban Services.

**CHAIR**—When this comes up for consideration, which is separate, would it look at coming out here to site lines and coming round this corner?

**Mr Corbell**—Yes, it would. That would be my understanding. That is a fairly standard process in any development proposal such as this.

**Mr Quinlan**—The parking problem that I mentioned earlier would exacerbate that problem.

**Mr Corbell**—The point to be made is whether that is resolved satisfactorily, and that is another issue.

**CHAIR**—Thank you for the evidence that you have given us today. We do appreciate your attendance.

**Mr Corbell**—Thank you for the opportunity.

[11.05 a.m.]

**APPLETON, Colonel Paul Frank, Project Director, Australian Command and Staff College, Department of Defence**

**BEAR, Mr Richard James, General Manager, Development and Sales, Defence Housing Authority**

**BEAUCHAMP, Mr Anton, Manager, Canberra Housing Management Centre, Defence Housing Authority**

**GUSTAVSEN, Mr Philip Carl, Project Officer, Development and Sales, Defence Housing Authority**

**LYON, Mr Keith Thomas, Managing Director, Defence Housing Authority**

**CHAIR**—I welcome representatives from the Defence Housing Authority. The committee has received a submission from the Defence Housing Authority dated 4 July 2000. Do you propose any amendments?

**Mr Lyon**—I do have one amendment. I would like to delete paragraph 2.6 from the submission and change the statement which is not correct.

**CHAIR**—It is proposed that the submission 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 document read as follows —*





**CHAIR**—I now ask that a representative of the Defence Housing Authority perhaps read a summary statement to the committee, after which we will proceed to questions.

**Mr Lyon**—I will be very brief. This development is important because it provides the Defence Housing Authority with the opportunity to provide 50 homes in an area which is close to the Defence College and within good transport links of the other workplaces for members of the Defence Force. Since we submitted the proposal to the committee we have received development approval from the commissioner responsible. I provided the committee with a copy of that approval earlier. For the record I should point out that the approval does not cover the work to be undertaken in Streeton Drive, as the commissioner has required for there to be further consultation on that point and also for the approval of parliament to be given.

**CHAIR**—Thank you Mr Lyon. We will proceed to questions.

**Mr FORREST**—I would like to know, firstly, if there were any alternative sites that you were able to consider and, secondly, why this was the favoured one.

**Mr Lyon**—Obtaining access to land in the ACT has not been easy for the authority. This site was identified as a result of a Defence Housing Authority and ACT government joint task force. It had been zoned for residential development in 1993 and met the requirements that the authority was looking to achieve in putting together a development in the Weston Creek area.

**Mr FORREST**—The other question I had was to do with the mix of dwellings on the site. It seems to be a spread between more intense and more like housing. How do you rationalise these sorts of decisions?

**Mr Bear**—From two points of view. We try to take into account the needs of different families and to design houses that meet changing family needs—from people with children to people without children. Having done that, the layout becomes an issue of what looks best on the site and makes best use of the land.

**Mr FORREST**—If the demand is as crucial as it is, why didn't you opt for a more dense option, which I note is possible on that planning designation? You could get more development on it than what is provided.

**Mr Bear**—It is our desire to build something that is within what is going on in that area. We do not wish to create an environment that is different from what is generally available in that area. It is as simple as that.

**Mr Lyon**—It is true that we could, under the planning arrangements, have more intense development. But for the type of housing that we were seeking to provide and for the particular client group of the Defence Force that we were aiming to meet, we settled on a combination that is towards the lower end of intensive development.

**Mr FORREST**—I do not know. We hear a lot about the problems Canberra has in providing accommodation. We have heard it earlier from previous witnesses, and here we have an

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opportunity to make this development more intensive and take some of the pressure off and you have not taken it.

**Mr Lyon**—It is a decision that has to be made at the margin. From a commercial point of view and from the point of view of meeting the ADF needs, this is the balance that we have settled on.

**Mr FORREST**—Is there some benefit commercially from a better return if it is not as intensive a development? Is that part of the reason rather than the suggestion you have just made? Is there some sort of benefit in better resale value?

**Mr Bear**—There are considerations of that type, but we did not do any detailed costing on the basis of a higher density.

**Mr Lyon**—We have taken a long-term view, because we see members of the Defence Force and their families being located here for quite a long time in the future. What we are looking for is that balance between amenity and commercial considerations. That really is an approach that the Defence Housing Authority takes seriously in all its developments.

**Mr FORREST**—I suppose you could have got another 25 on this one. You will be back to see us later for another hit at another site, probably.

**Mr Bear**—We will not be back, Mr Forrest.

**Mr FORREST**—On that account. Thank you.

**Mr Bear**—There are also considerations of what the development approvals are likely to be. There would have been considerable concern on the part of the commissioner about a density any greater than what we are proposing. He stipulated that it must not be less than 40 and no more than 50 in the development process.

**Senator MURPHY**—With regard to the issue relating to the Defence college, when did Defence first advise DHA that housing might be a problem for them?

**Mr Lyon**—The defence department did not advise us per se that the college would present problems in terms of housing. Indeed, when the committee took evidence with the creation of the college, the committee was advised that the housing would come from the community. This development occurred because, from an overall portfolio management point of view, we have a need to meet the needs of about 1,800 families in the ACT for Defence. At that time we had stock of around 1,350 houses. So we were relying on rental allowance quite significantly. Further down the track, we have a significant number of leases expiring over the next four years as a result of the commitments that we have entered into. What I was concerned about was providing to the Department of Defence and members of the Defence Force a balanced selection of houses. This opportunity came about because of the assistance of the ACT government in identifying the site.

Some members of the Defence Force who will use this facility will be associated with the college but some will also be working elsewhere within the Defence department's requirements

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in the ACT. Indeed, some of those who go on to the college will be posted into other appointments within Canberra.

**Senator MURPHY**—If the defence college had not been located where it is located, would this particular land purchase and development have been a consideration?

**Mr Lyon**—Certainly we still would have gone through the same process because we have this total amount of 1,800-odd families.

**Senator MURPHY**—The same process being that you would have looked for land?

**Mr Lyon**—We would have look for land. Without question, the fact that the college is down the road did give us a focal point in looking for land in Weston Creek. I was also aware that the Weston Creek area was an area that was of some concern to the ACT government in terms of ensuring that the schools and preschools had a feed arrangement because of the ageing of the population group—the sorts of issues that Mr Quinlan referred to earlier. I could see benefit to both Defence and also to the community.

**Senator MURPHY**—Could I go back to my original question? Did Defence advise you about the college?

**Mr Lyon**—Of course they advised us about the college.

**Senator MURPHY**—Is it possible for us to be appraised of what the advice was?

**Mr Lyon**—I would need to take that on notice. The broad planning arrangements which existed at that time and which have since been substantially streamlined as a result of the agreement that has just been signed between the Defence department and the Defence Housing Authority include advice each year on the Defence housing requirements. That covered information on what was happening with regard to appointments.

**Senator MURPHY**—In terms of the options you considered at page 2, in point 4 of your submission you said that you considered:

- (a) Construction with a view to retaining the properties or selling them with a lease attached;
- (b) Direct purchase with a view to retaining the properties or selling them with a lease attached; and
- (c) Direct leases from the private rental market.

You went on to say at 4.2:

Selective purchasing is able to ensure those needs are met where supply exists, but there are few suitable established residences available for 'spot' purchase in the more central areas of Canberra -

As you know, the concern I have is with regard to knowing exactly what the Defence numbers are—which is a question which will have to be addressed to Defence—but I did take the liberty of looking at the Saturday 15 July property guide from the *Canberra Times* and again the one of 12 August. It seemed to me that there were a number of private developments located in what I thought you might have meant in terms of more central areas that seemed to come within the

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price bracket of what the overall cost of this development is going to run into. I even noticed that there is a reasonable amount of land for sale in various areas. I am not sure that the price comes into the same category. In so far as the type of housing stock you are proposing for Stirling, it would not be appropriate to argue that neither the numbers nor the quality of housing are not available in the private market.

**Mr Lyon**—It is a question of getting access to the quality and type of house that we are looking for and getting it within the right price boundaries. Within Canberra we rely very extensively on the private market. We have 400 people receiving a rental allowance at the present time and that is a very significant proportion, especially in a market that has a vacancy factor as low as Canberra. It is comparatively low; it is now one per cent, but anywhere around two per cent is quite a tight market. We also rely on the strategy of direct leasing—that is, going to the community and saying, ‘These are our requirements. Will you lease houses?’ We have a campaign at the moment seeking to expand that range of activities, so we are following the full sweep of activities. But where it is possible, and given the fact that our mini-stock is only about three-quarters of the total demand, we are keen to do a development of this type, which will significantly give us a capability that we have not had before.

**Senator MURPHY**—What is your understanding of the numbers that the Defence College will have in terms of increasing the number of personnel coming to Canberra?

**Mr Lyon**—Colonel Appleton might respond to that, instead of us giving you that information second hand.

**CHAIR**—Colonel Appleton, perhaps you might respond to Senator Murphy’s question.

**Col. Appleton**—I advised the director of housing in the Australian Defence Headquarters in June last year that we estimated there would be an additional 100 families associated with the co-location of the staff colleges. The 100 families did not include those from overseas.

**Senator MURPHY**—In submissions to this committee last year, when we dealt with the new Defence College, Defence had been making an assessment of two things, I suppose: first, the location of its officers who come to the training course and, second, where they are located after that. It was put to us that they often get back to back postings. I understand that it is a one-year course—

**Col. Appleton**—That is right.

**Senator MURPHY**—with the possibility of a posting to Canberra for another year or two years. Is that correct?

**Col. Appleton**—I was not part of those proceedings, but we are working now on our postings and there will be people coming to the Australian Command and Staff Course next year from all over Australia. Some will come from Canberra, so they will be posted to the Australian Command and Staff Course and then maybe posted out. Others posted to the Australian Command and Staff Course will remain in Canberra, yes.

**Senator MURPHY**—Would you be able to provide the committee with an assessment of—

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**Col. Appleton**—I am not in a position to do that. I can certainly take that on notice, though.

**Senator MURPHY**—I would appreciate it if you would. Can you also inform the committee as to whether or not, when those officers come in from other parts of countries to attend the college, it is the practice of the defence department to advise those officers that they will receive a back to back posting prior to them coming to the college?

**Col. Appleton**—Again I am not in a position to say, anecdotally. I could say that it would depend upon the individuals, but I can also provide something in writing to you.

**Senator MURPHY**—I think it would be important in terms of the individual's personal life planning to have some knowledge of where they are going to be after they complete the course.

**Col. Appleton**—That is often the case, but in some particular cases—I know the Australian Command and Staff Course is so important for people's careers—the posting organisations are very dependent upon the results of the staff college to ensure that subsequent placements are filled by people who meet the criteria.

**Senator MURPHY**—If I can just explain why I asked that question, Mr Chairman. We are trying to understand, if you like, the need side of the equation. We can take at face value only what we are told. For us—certainly from my point of view—to understand what is the need insofar as the development is concerned, I would like to know how the system works. If there is an argument that people receive back to back postings—which, as I said, was put to us in June last year—I would like to know more. There must some assessment of what the percentages are and of whether or not you inform those officers when they come to Canberra. If it is based on an achievement rate, somebody must have some information. I would appreciate getting that information.

**Col. Appleton**—I can certainly ask the posting organisation to do that. I am not part of that, so I cannot speak on their behalf, but I can certainly try to find that information for you. I will reiterate that we see a need for about 100 families each year. These students are here for only one year. Students still keep coming in—there will still be a requirement for accommodation for them.

**Mr FORREST**—I support you, Senator Murphy. We had an inquiry on the collocation. We told the parliament, and therefore the taxpayers of Australia, that Defence had advised that DHA would prepare a business study and would make a decision on whether or not it would require additional housing. Defence said they did not think that housing was an issue at this stage and that, if DHA could not provide the number required, the commercial market would be used. That is what we told the parliament. Now we are being asked to approve another big whack of capital, and the case has been made that it is very much because of the collocation. The committee wants an answer. I know you probably cannot answer yourself, but we made our decision and put recommendations to the parliament. As a result, we closed Queenscliff off. We were part of the decision to close off Queenscliff. Had we known there was another significant amount of capital needed to meet the housing need, we could have made a different decision. That is the background behind Senator Murphy's question, which I support.

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**Senator MURPHY**—I draw your attention to page 19—in particular, point 51—of the submission that is attached to the 11 June *Hansard* of the hearing of last year. You may also like to refer to pages 43 and 52 of the *Hansard*.

**CHAIR**—I would like to follow up on that. Mr Lyon, in 4.4 of your statement of evidence, you referred to a joint press release by the ACT Chief Minister and the Minister assisting the Minister for Defence, who is your minister. It indicates publicly that, over the next four years, the HA will build 900 new homes at a cost of \$200 million, but in the material provided to us in relation to the demand, which we talked about earlier, there will be a growth in housing requirements in the current year of only 3,535 increasing to 3,640 in 2002-03, which is a growth of 105. So in four years, one part of the evidence says there will be a growth of 105, but your press statement says you will be building 900 new homes. Can you reconcile that for me?

**Mr Lyon**—The reference in the minister's press release related to an assessment of meeting the defence housing total demand based on the premise that the Defence Housing Authority would move to manage about 85 per cent of the total demand. When the statement was formulated, there was recognition that there was a very heavy reliance in the ACT on rental allowance, which I have already referred to, plus account was taken of the numbers of expiring leases.

**CHAIR**—The number of expiring leases in your private briefing were relatively small—perhaps about 170 in the next four years.

**Mr Lyon**—It is of that order; in fact, it is a bit more than that. It is about 329 in total.

**CHAIR**—They were not the numbers you gave us in the private briefing.

**Mr Beauchamp**—There are 510 leases expiring over the four-year period that we spoke of, and the best we could hope to retain out of that is around 330, leaving us an acquisition program of 180. We do not expect to actually retain as many as 330; that is the best scenario. In addition to that, we of course have to consider off-base houses which are becoming older and will require replacement. We are figuring on around 110 of those in the next three to four years. Housing at Royal Military College, Duntroon—which is mid-fifties style housing—needs replacing. In this financial year that we have just completed, we have acquired in the order of 200 houses.

**CHAIR**—Okay, but this press release was saying to build 900 new homes.

**Mr Lyon**—Ministers were referring to the total demand. From the authority's point of view, it builds when it has to and when it gets opportunities, and it focuses on the availability of land. But by and large, we try to get our houses out of the community. Indeed, if you looked at our total stock at the present time, the figure I have got in front of me is about 1,370. The DHA ownership of that group is just under 500. The rest are leased from the community and a lot of those houses are new ones that have been built, so I hope that reconciles.

**Senator MURPHY**—We have had the discussion before on the matter of numbers and how you utilise the private market in terms of lease, rental or purchase. Mr Lyon, could you take this on notice and provide the answer to the committee: as a result of your new service agreement,

as I understand it, you will be considering the number of people that you would in any one area—but I will deal with Canberra on this occasion—place in the private rental market, that is, your rental assistance program; the number of houses that you might seek to purchase from the private sector, and I assume based on the cost effectiveness of that; and, likewise, the number of houses in the lease program. Could you provide your plan for the ACT, given the numbers in required MQs for the next five years?

**Mr Lyon**—We would be happy to do that.

**CHAIR**—I would just like to add the information that I was looking for. I was concerned that in the early private briefing when we were looking at this particular document, which was the Canberra housing requirement, we were asking you how many extra leases had to be entered into. The numbers that were given were in the year 2000-01, 21; in 2001-02, 17; and in 2002-03, 142. But you seem to be giving other information now during the public hearing. Is that right or wrong?

**Mr Beauchamp**—No, it is the same information.

**CHAIR**—The same number. So if you add 21, 17 and 142, you are getting to the 170 to 180 number. Is that right?

**Mr Beauchamp**—That is correct.

**CHAIR**—So you are really saying that these 900 new homes over that period is not right?

**Mr Lyon**—We are saying that the effect of the expiring leases is that figure, but there are other aspects of our programs—such as houses that we own in the private sector that will require replacement—which impinge on the total housing requirement over the next four years.

**CHAIR**—I am proposing that we move into a different area. Is the committee happy with that area so far?

**Mr FORREST**—Yes. We need to be formally advised of progress in regard to traffic calming. We need to get that on the public record on this map which is behind us.

**CHAIR**—And the risk to DHA in relation to that issue.

**Mr Bear**—In obtaining the development approval, the Commissioner for Land asked that the traffic situation be relooked at. We have had an engineer do some more work. We have had them talk to the planning authority and take into account the comments they have received from a variety of sources. They have come up with the plan that is displayed on the board there, which replaces the traffic calming devices, traffic islands, speed humps and that type of thing with two roundabouts at the main intersections. It is now the intention to discuss that in a more formal way with the planning authority and with a meeting of the community group. Provided that the planning authority can be satisfied that that represents a satisfactory solution to various concerns, then that signs that off. The particular issues with regard to solving that problem do not have to be referred back to the development approval process. The development approval is independent of that but requires that to take place.



**CHAIR**—At whose risk? What is the risk to DHA?

**Mr Lyon**—The risk to DHA is that the required planning approval from PALM, following the consultation, is not forthcoming. We believe that to be a low risk, given the amount of work and consultation that has already occurred.

**CHAIR**—Is there any financial risk?

**Mr Lyon**—The cost of doing that work is the responsibility of the ACT government. This is a normal arrangement. That is to be taken from the price which the authority is paying the ACT government for the lease and concern.

**CHAIR**—Mr Forrest, does that answer your question?

**Mr FORREST**—Yes. I would be interested to know how the community consultation will be conducted. There is some criticism, in submissions we received, about consultation. One of the criticisms is that the community felt that DHA would retain 100 per cent ownership of this land and yet we now know that it is your intention to privately sell up to half of it. Obviously the communication has broken down somewhere. Could you outline the process of community consultation you have adopted so far and what you intend to do for the rest of it?

**Mr Beauchamp**—Community consultation commenced early this year with a meeting at the Weston Creek community centre, where we invited the community to view the basic proposal for the development of this land. We outlined the intention to build approximately 50 houses on the site. We sought community input from that meeting. We have subsequently attended two Weston Creek Community Council meetings and, again, sought and presented various aspects of the development such as the initial road calming devices, which have subsequently been changed, and invited again public comment from those meetings. We have had three opportunities for the public to put their views forward.

**Mr FORREST**—How have you issued that invitation? You have written to the executive of the community group and relied on them to talk to the rest of the members?

**Mr Beauchamp**—Yes, we have.

**Mr FORREST**—That may be where the weak link is.

**Mr Beauchamp**—We have also placed advertisements in the local press to announce those meetings. We have utilised the Weston Creek Community Council for assistance in letterbox drops and we have also done those box drops ourselves.

**Mr FORREST**—So the next step will be to write again to the local community group and rely on them to ensure that all of the—

**Mr Beauchamp**—And we will utilise the press to ensure that it gets maximum coverage.

**Mr Lyon**—Just on the process, it has to be agreed with PALM under the directions emanating from the development approval.

**Mr FORREST**—Just in reference to the other question about future ownership, can you explain how that misunderstanding has occurred? Was there an intention originally that DHA would retain full ownership of every lot?

**Mr Lyon**—The ownership is an issue that I do not believe the authority discussed because it is tied up very much with the financing of the property. The general approach that the authority likes to adopt is to use the sale and lease-back program because it has been found to be a very effective way of financing housing in the community and it is widely used right throughout the whole of Australia very successfully.

**Mr Bear**—Any sale program will be on the basis of leasing back, it would not be on the basis of a direct sale.

**Mr Lyon**—There will be Defence tenants in those houses for a very significant period.

**CHAIR**—In the minutes of the community consultative meeting on Wednesday, 2 February, a question was asked of you, when will construction begin on the site. The answer was:

The proposal is to start construction in mid June and complete by beginning of December 2000 to accommodate the placement of families by January 2001.

How could you give that advice to the committee consultative meeting when it is plainly now not true?

**Mr Beauchamp**—That was the preferred time frame in which we would like to have achieved the completion of the project in order to support the Defence College, so that the houses were available in order for families to move in prior to the commencement of the course.

**CHAIR**—So there was a need for this at that time, but clearly the need now is not there.

**Mr Beauchamp**—The need is still there for us to house Defence people, but we will house the people who are posting in in other areas and indeed in the private sector.

**CHAIR**—If that is the case, why do you want to proceed with this development, if you are going to house them in other areas?

**Mr Beauchamp**—Because there still remains an overall need to provide housing for up to 1,800 families in the Canberra region and we are unable to do that.

**Senator MURPHY**—I have to say that I cannot accept the 1,800 figure because it simply does not fit. An argument that we keep having is that you break up the way you meet the housing requirement for Defence in a particular way. Eighteen hundred is the total and it should not be used as a figure to this committee as an argument that you need to somehow construct a number of houses to fill up that gap, because you would never do that. We know that; you know that.

**Mr Beauchamp**—Where I was going to was that the total housing requirement is 1,800 and we are—

**Senator MURPHY**—But you will never ever build 1,800 houses to meet that need because you have a different break-up. You have a figure, and what we have to get to is exactly what you intended to do in the break-up. Okay, if it is 1,300 or if it is 1,500, then that is the figure that we should be dealing with. You can forget 1,800.

**Mr Beauchamp**—The 1,800 I am referring to is—

**Senator MURPHY**—I know what it is. You do not have to explain it to me. What I want us to deal with is exactly what we are dealing with in terms of replacement stock and the requirements you need in terms of new stock. That is why I asked the question earlier about telling us exactly how you meet the 1,800: how many you are going to put on rental assistance and how many actual married quarters you intend to supply in this ACT region.

**Mr Lyon**—We are happy to do that. As we have indicated, we will provide that. In terms of our planning, we think in terms of the total requirement and then we break it up along the lines that we have talked about. In our thinking, we separate the volume of stock that we need to have under long-term management, some of which we own and some of which is under long-term leases. We also have a variety of short-term leases. We have a complete strategy. With regard to the question that we have been asked, ideally we would like to have had this development ready at the commencement of the next cycle. When we started the process we were, rather optimistically, aiming to achieve that timetable. It has taken us longer to get to this point, so it is now not possible to have those houses available by Christmas. We intend, subject to the committee's approval, to have them available midyear, when there is also another posting cycle. It is not as extensive as the Christmas posting cycle but it is still a significant one.

**Senator MURPHY**—In your own evidence you tell us that, by the year 2004-05, you intend to have 1,510 houses under management. That is the figure that we need to deal with.

**Mr Lyon**—I am happy to.

**Mr Beauchamp**—I was coming to those figures.

**Mr FORREST**—We always come back to this same issue. It really is a thorn in our side. If these people in emergency are being placed, then where are we at? Mr Beauchamp was attempting to answer this question. Can you go back to that point?

**Mr Beauchamp**—I would suggest that it is not in an emergency. We are placing them in housing but we are still at rental assistance levels of around 400 houses and our rental assistance levels will increase as a result of the influx of people to the college.

**CHAIR**—I would like to ask you—and those of us in DHA will know—is this development another Vincent? What occurred in Vincent in Townsville was that every house was an ADF married quarter and it caused tremendous social problems. I ask that question because this committee is required to look at the suitability of this particular work for the purpose for which it is being constructed.

**Mr Lyon**—It is planned that all 50 of these houses will be occupied by members of the ADF. Obviously, we have looked at the implications of this quite closely. We believe that, in the context of the Weston Creek area, this concentration of members of the Defence Force is reasonable. We think the outcome is—

**CHAIR**—Is your evidence that it is unavoidable?

**Mr Lyon**—Basically. It is both unavoidable and, we think, also quite manageable.

**CHAIR**—There is an apparent inconsistency between your statement of evidence and the executive summary. It relates to the contaminated fill. Point 7.4 says:

... the fill, from a contamination point of view, is suitable for use on residential developments.

That was a report from ESA. The executive summary says:

The proposed site is technically suitable subject to the removal and replacement of previously uncontrolled fill.

Those statements are inconsistent.

**Mr Bear**—There is no contamination on the site. I think that is the differentiation that we are trying to make there. When I talk about ‘contamination’ at point 7, I am saying that this has not been the site of a sheep dip, a munitions factory or something like that. In that respect, the land is suitable for building on from an environmental point of view. From a construction management point of view, the soil could be said to be unstable because of what has been put there in the past. To make that property suitable for the foundations of homes, there is some site remediation work to be done but that is construction type work, not environmental type work.

**CHAIR**—So the statements are not inconsistent?

**Mr Bear**—No, they are not. They are two different things.

**CHAIR**—In 12.3 of your statement of evidence, you talk about indicative dwelling plans and say that, with associated site works and services, they will represent 87 per cent use of the site, with 13 per cent allocated to common public area. To me, on that colour document which shows the layout it does not look as though 87 per cent of the site is being used. Is that right or not?

**Mr Bear**—Yes, but it is the fence lines. A backyard is use of the site. It is a definitional issue there. The 13 per cent accounts for the areas here and the areas here. You will notice a big area in front there and the areas down there—there are not people’s backyards.

**CHAIR**—So it is not an overdevelopment of the site?

**Mr Bear**—It certainly isn’t.

**CHAIR**—Okay. In relation to sewerage, in 16.2 it says that the required building services are available and that there will be associated head costs for providing hydraulic services, including vehicular access and construction of a footpath. Do hydraulic services include sewerage?

**Mr Bear**—That includes sewerage to the site that we are talking about and connecting it to the rest of the complex.

**CHAIR**—The head costs mentioned here are what I would call head works. Is that the situation?

**Mr Bear**—Absolutely.

**Senator MURPHY**—With regard to vehicular access, et cetera, is that the same as what is referred to in the Urban Services letter as associated costs?

**Mr Bear**—No, it is not associated costs. That is the part of the work that the developer, the Defence Housing Authority, is responsible for. The ACT government do not pay for the roads inside the site. You are coming back to the—

**Senator MURPHY**—Yes, the ATN and the other figure which is on the previous page. If we could just get some—

**Mr Bear**—I have got the answer to that for you; I have drafted you a note.

**Senator MURPHY**—Thank you.

**CHAIR**—When you decided that DHA intended to market 50 per cent of the development site for its sale and lease-back program, what was the reason for choosing 50 per cent?

**Mr Lyon**—It was simply a commercial judgment on the part of the authority at that stage. We may sell more than 50 per cent further down the track, but at this point of time we believe that 50 per cent is an appropriate number.

**Senator MURPHY**—What is the basis for your assumptions in the costings that you have given us for the realisation prices?

**Mr Bear**—We obtain independent reports from valuers in the Canberra region, in particular McCann and Associates who are well known for that sort of work in this area. We have commissioned them to undertake a report and suggest to us what values might be. For the purposes of deciding if this was a viable arrangement and no more, those values would obviously have to be reassessed in the light of what is actually built and what the market is at that time.

**Senator MURPHY**—I am just trying to measure what you are expressing.

**Mr Lyon**—We also take a close daily interest in the market.

**Senator MURPHY**—I do not take a daily interest.

**Mr Lyon**—Indeed, last year in the sale and lease-back program we sold 130 houses in the ACT, so we are pretty much right across what is happening.

**Senator MURPHY**—Yes, I just could not say; mind you, I have not had a full study.

**CHAIR**—Gentlemen, given that your evidence has been that the people who will be housed in this new development will not necessarily be going to the commanded staff college, wouldn't it have been cheaper to build something at Tuggeranong or Queanbeyan? What is your advice on that?

**Mr Lyon**—We are doing that. In fact, we are building where we can, and I have asked Mr Beauchamp to give you some more details. What we were looking for in Canberra—which is what we look for elsewhere—is for a balanced portfolio. Our portfolio at the present time is out of balance in the sense that we really do not have the proportion of houses located closer to the centre of Canberra as we would like.

**CHAIR**—But there is a cost implication of that.

**Mr Lyon**—We believe that this particular project will fit in with our cost requirements. We are responsible for meeting many of Defence's rental arrangements. We do it on an average covering housing right across the whole of the city. These are townhouse developments, so they are more concentrated. We have provided to the committee the information on the rental prices that we expect to get, and it fits within the sort of boundaries that have been set.

**CHAIR**—It fits within, but it can be done cheaper somewhere else.

**Mr Lyon**—True, but what we try to do is balance the wishes of the families and amenity against cost. It is a balanced approach that the government are looking for us to provide within their policy parameters, and that is what we are doing here.

**CHAIR**—Thank you. You mentioned townhouses. What level of amenity does a person or a family who will occupy these particular units get that a private family does not get?

**Mr Beauchamp**—The level of amenity for families in these areas will be based on the group entitlement for rank that we require to house. So the average home will be a three- or four-bedroom home; it will have an en suite bathroom, a family room and a study, in these particular cases.

**CHAIR**—We talked about the wishes of the family. Have you surveyed your customers to understand what their wishes are?

**Mr Beauchamp**—We have taken into account the requirement of the defence department insomuch as what the various levels of houses—

**CHAIR**—So the answer is no?

**Mr Beauchamp**—Not specific families.

**Mr Bear**—Not specifically in this case. We are regularly talking to families and conducting exercises to see what the need is and going through our databases to make sure that the houses

that we are allocating are meeting those needs. There is no group of people, in this case, labelled to move into it just yet that you could sit down in a room.

**CHAIR**—Why does this proposal represent best taxpayer value for money in both capital and recurrent dollar terms?

**Mr Lyon**—It represents best value. Firstly, from the defence department's point of view, it fits in with the policy parameters in rental arrangements that they have given us. Secondly, from the Defence Housing Authority's point of view, these houses are ideally located and over time we expect there to be reasonable capital growth for the houses that we hang on to. Plus, we believe that they will be attractive for those investors who provide the capital for us to meet the defence housing requirement. As I said before, our strategy is not to own every house. Indeed, in Canberra, out of the 1,350 houses that we have under long-term management—to address the point that the senator was directing our attention to a second ago—we actually own about only 500 houses. It is by reducing the government's capital that is tied up in this business that we achieve value.

**CHAIR**—For the purposes of the record, would you confirm that the purchase of the lease of the land is now certain? Is that correct?

**Mr Lyon**—Yes.

**CHAIR**—The development authority has been received and agreed and signed off on?

**Mr Bear**—I will freshly table that copy.

**CHAIR**—Yes, okay.

**Mr Bear**—We can include that in the documentation.

**CHAIR**—So the outstanding issue is the traffic management work. Is that correct?

**Mr Bear**—Yes.

**CHAIR**—That is not a risk for DHA?

**Mr Bear**—Correct.

**CHAIR**—With respect to the other risks to the project, the cost of landfill is capped, site remediation is capped—

**Mr Bear**—Site remediation is the responsibility of the ACT government.

**CHAIR**—Are there any other risks that you are aware of?

**Mr Lyon**—No. I just want to clarify that Stretton Drive is not a financial risk for the authority, which is what Mr Bear was responding to. The approval has to be agreed by PALM

and, until that is forthcoming, there is an issue there. We believe that to be a low risk, but it still has to be agreed.

**Senator MURPHY**—I think it is appropriate that we probably put the remediation work in the correct context. I think it is the responsibility of DHA; it is just that it will be the subject of—

**Mr Lyon**—The cost will be met by the ACT.

**Senator MURPHY**—No, it will be met by DHA in an overall sense. It is just part of the negotiated sale price. That is what it is.

**Mr Bear**—The purchase price that the Defence Housing Authority are paying is the agreed Australian Valuation Office value, and that value assumes that the remediation work has been undertaken.

**Senator MURPHY**—And the ACT will get whatever is left after the remediation work.

**Mr Bear**—Absolutely.

**Senator MURPHY**—I have a couple of questions with regard to the group rank system. I listened to Mr Beauchamp's comment. Under the new services agreement, you have been allocated a responsibility, as I understand it, in terms of determining the type of housing. Is that correct?

**Mr Lyon**—We have been given the additional responsibility of allocating members to particular houses. The type of housing is still specified by the Department of Defence and is still based on rank.

**Senator MURPHY**—So they intend to continue with the GRS?

**Mr Lyon**—We have been talking about it with the Department of Defence, and we have agreed formally as part of the services agreement that we will look at more effective ways in the future of specifying the requirement and managing it. What we have in mind is allowing members of the Defence Force more choice than what they currently have.

**Senator MURPHY**—I understand the issue of choice. The group rank system issue was submitted to us before. Colonel Appleton might be able to take this further on notice with regard to the trends for personnel. The reason I ask you about the back-to-back postings is that it has been put to us that there is a trend for people who are posted to our region for a shorter period of time not to take their family.

**Mr Lyon**—We would have to consult the Department of Defence.

**Senator MURPHY**—I think that is also relevant for DHA in terms of how it then manages to meet an MQ requirement—the married quarter requirement—for Defence in any one particular region.



**Mr Lyon**—That is true. Indeed, we are in constant discussion with the Defence department. The senator would be aware that the Defence department is looking at ways in which it can stabilise the posting arrangements. In fact, there is a task force within Defence specifically putting together advice on that at the moment.

**CHAIR**—Gentlemen, as there are no further questions, I thank you for appearing before the committee today. Just before we finish, it is proposed that the copy of the decision on the development application be incorporated in the transcript of evidence and that the two documents on the board behind me be taken as exhibits. Do members have any objections? There being no objection, it is so ordered.

*The document read as follows —*



[12.05 p.m.]

**CARL, Mr Jeffrey Wayne, Chairperson, Weston Creek Community Council**

**SUTHERLAND, Mr Robert Hugh, Deputy Chairman, Weston Creek Community Council**

**CHAIR**—Welcome to this public hearing. The committee has received the submission from the Weston Creek Community Council dated the 31 July 2000. Are you proposing any amendments to that submission?

**Mr Carl**—It has come to my notice that there is an error of fact in paragraph 11, line 1. Reference is made to seven suburbs in Weston Creek; there are actually eight.

**CHAIR**—Thank you. Are there no other amendments?

**Mr Carl**—No.

**CHAIR**—It is proposed that the submission 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 document read as follows—*



**CHAIR**—I now invite you to make a short statement supporting your submission, then we will proceed to questions.

**Mr Carl**—Our submission basically covers everything that we are aware of and what we know about the development. We agree with most of Mr Quinlan's positives given in his discussion. I would be wasting time if I repeated those.

**CHAIR**—Mr Sutherland, do you wish to make a statement?

**Mr Sutherland**—No, I do not have anything further to add to the submission.

**CHAIR**—You say that local traders are in favour of the development proposals. What is your evidence for that?

**Mr Carl**—I have spoken to the traders' spokesperson at the Chapman local centre shops. I have also spoken to the traders at the Rivett local centre shops and I have spoken to the traders' spokesperson at the Weston Creek group centre.

**CHAIR**—You said that the proposed traffic calming solution was not acceptable in its present form. This may be unfair on you because you have only just seen what is behind us, but would you care to make a comment on the new proposal?

**Mr Carl**—From what I can see, the two roundabouts are an acceptable solution to us. We have discussed it in private consultations with the traffic people from Urban Services.

**CHAIR**—In point 4 of your executive summary you said that,

Whilst this lack of consultation will not affect the community's support for the project, it does reflect poorly on DHA's conduct of the community consultation process in terms of information dissemination.

I think DHA have tried hard to involve the community, but you are not happy?

**Mr Carl**—Our main concern perhaps goes to the amount of information we have been given. We have had a number of public meetings. Residents have asked questions. Some of the answers we have been given are inconsistent with the submissions in the statement of evidence and some of the answers we have been given, such as on the ownership issue, are distinctly different.

**CHAIR**—My question revolved around traffic management, but I have been superseded. Were you also supporting that roundabout at the Command and Staff College that has just been built?

**Mr Sutherland**—We had several meetings on that and there were suggestions about traffic lights and a roundabout. We believe the roundabout is probably the best way to go, but—and it is a very big 'but'—that also depends on the proposed duplication of the road from Streeton

Drive. The ACT government announced in its last budget this financial year that there will be \$100,000 for design works and then the work should commence next financial year.

**Mr FORREST**—This repeated concern about Mount Stromlo came up when we dealt with the inquiry on the college. You refer to the two glass lights at the entrance. I thought we had addressed that—that it was to be fixed. Why are you continuing to be concerned about that?

**Mr Carl**—Are you referring to Attachment A in our submission?

**Mr FORREST**—Yes.

**Mr Carl**—That was just a straight copy of our written submission to the Moylan inquiry.

**Mr FORREST**—I beg your pardon.

**Mr Sutherland**—I do not think it is a very serious or even big issue, but I think it does show some lack of sensitivity. There is a light problem there. Those lights are not, I believe, suitable in that they throw light up into the air, where it is not needed.

**Senator MURPHY**—I thought they were going to change that.

**Mr Sutherland**—I hope they have, but it has not to this day been done as far as I know.

**Senator MURPHY**—We will get on with it.

**Mr FORREST**—The week after it could be fixed.

**Mr Sutherland**—It is more a matter of showing a good example than anything else.

**CHAIR**—Gentlemen, thank you for your strong support for this budget and thank you for your input. We appreciate your attendance here this day.

**Mr Carl**—There is one comment I forgot. We strongly support the defence establishment there. We see it as a much preferable option than it going to private sale and being developed at a higher density.

**CHAIR**—Thank you for that.

[12.12 p.m.]

**ANDERSON, Mr Peter John (Private capacity)**

**HOLMES, Ms Michelle (Private capacity)**

**CHAIR**—The committee has received a submission from you dated 24 July. Do you propose any amendments to that submission?

**Ms Holmes**—No.

**CHAIR**—I now invite you to make a short statement supporting your submission and then we will ask you some questions.

**Ms Holmes**—The reason we are here today is to represent residents' concerns about this proposal. We are the only residents in the area who have been invited to put views forward in person to the committee. Simply, residents believe that this proposal is not in the right location. We have problems with its conception and we would like to ask that it be reviewed. In my submission to this committee I provided some previous correspondence regarding the development that outlined some of these issues. I would like to run through some of those.

One of the items I provided was a copy of a letter to Planning and Land Management on 24 May, which was to refer 462 signatures collected for a petition against development. People were very interested in signing this petition. Whilst collecting the signatures it became very clear that community feeling against the location of the development was quite strong. Mainly the concerns were about the high density of the proposal in view of the surrounding neighbourhood, and the traffic problems, which I am aware that you also view as a concern because they have been discussed since I have been here today.

One of the main problems with the traffic—and I have not had the opportunity to see what was on the board before, but I think that it still looks the same—is that all the vehicles from this development are to be distributed in one central point onto Streeton Drive, which is a major road. To me, that appears to still be a problem. I would like to emphasise the point that it is clearly ridiculous to try and distribute that much traffic from 50 households onto a concentrated area of what is an extremely busy thoroughfare. I think you will find that most people who live in the area use cars as transport. Public transport in the area is not very accessible for people travelling into the city and so forth. So you will find that Weston Creek is a high-density car area; everybody uses their cars. Most households have more than one car.

Equally, at meetings people who live in the area have had a lot of concerns about the traffic calming measures that were originally proposed. I am not quite sure what is proposed at the moment regarding traffic calming. People were concerned that narrowing of the road and introducing other obstacles would actually cause more problems by impeding the flow of traffic and subsequently increasing the traffic noise for residents in the area. Personally, I have some very real concerns about my own safety and that of the other residents in that section of Streeton

Drive, who need to exit their driveway in peak morning traffic, also allowing for dodging buses that go past which reduce access onto the road.

I have not seen the proposal that Mr Quinlan was talking about. I came in at the end of that. But the proposal of a service road, I think, has some merit in maintaining the current streetscape and mature shrubs in the area and perhaps having the traffic exit in a different area, not in such a concentrated area onto Streeton Drive.

I also have some comments about DHA. I read with interest the information package that was supplied to the committee. I believe that DHA was being misleading by underestimating the level of community concern about the location of the proposal in their submission. Particularly of interest to me was Minister Scott's media release of December 1999, which I had not seen before. In this release, the Chief Minister, Mrs Carnell, stated that a variety of sites in the region would be considered and named a range of sites for the development, for example in Holder and Curtin, and that changes to the territory plan may be appropriate. To my knowledge, the Stirling site currently proposed is the only site that was offered to DHA because it was a simple answer. Apparently it was decided by the government not to consider any sites that would require alterations to the territory plan. I do not understand why that is. To people who live in South Canberra, this is ludicrous, because there is no shortage of land in South Canberra that would be quite suitable for development. There may be just a bunch of horses that are running around on it at the moment, or something like that. There is land that is in very close proximity to the college. To name just a few, there is land along the Cotter Road corridor, between Cotter Road and Hindmarsh Drive, or on the corner of Darwinia Crescent and Hindmarsh Drive.

In my submission I also attached a copy of a letter to the Department of Urban Services of 9 May which outlines in more detail my concerns regarding the density of the housing, the traffic problems and the loss of public space. Just to summarise those points, firstly, the development will remove what is currently a vacant block of land that is used by residents for recreational purposes. Most of the land surrounding this development is used for specific sporting purposes currently, and in fact some of it is closed off to the public by fencing. I also believe, and other residents believe, that the development will significantly devalue the properties of residents, which is obviously of great concern to the residents, many of them older residents, who live in that area. Maybe some of those residents would consider selling their houses to defence housing for a reasonable price. The development will also cause considerable traffic problems which I have discussed, not just for the residents but people who regularly commute through that area from Chapman and surrounding suburbs.

There are also problems currently with the infrastructure in Weston Creek, just simple things like the local shopping centre car park being normally at capacity. I do not really know how they would accommodate extra cars. Bob Sutherland also mentioned some issues with Cotter Road and the problems with the capacity of traffic at the moment. Within the next few years, I believe, the ACT government has some measures in place to address that, but currently it is not very attractive trying to drive into the city in the morning, or in fact going past the Defence College.

There are also some issues about local wildlife—particularly birds—in the area which I do not think have been addressed. Personally, the issue that I find disconcerting about the proposal is that absolutely no consideration has been given to current residents in the area—and it is most

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important for the residents—regarding the density of the development across the road. It is not consistent with the surrounding suburb, despite what I think you have heard today. In the area, that style of housing is not consistent at all.

DHA has not undertaken in any respect the level of public consultation that they were required to do or that they said they would do in some of their earlier statements—for example, in the media release. Unfortunately, a sign of DHA's approach to this development was recently demonstrated quite clearly to me. A few days ago a sign was posted at the Chapman end of the site alerting people that the land was flagged for Defence Housing, and drawing attention to this committee process. However, the date for lodging submissions had already closed when this sign was posted. The location of the sign ensured it would not be visible to residents in Stirling or Streeton Drive north of Darwinia Crescent. To me this is not a sign of DHA operating in good faith. It is just one example that I can outline for you.

I only recently had it brought to my attention that perhaps this development is not appropriate to what Defence service people actually want. Apparently, the Hamilton report of April 1996 makes recommendations that Defence families do not wish to live in such high-density developments that are not in keeping with their local environment. I request that the committee reject the location of this development until a more suitable site can be found. I think there are issues that the local residents have. It is they, in effect, who will be most affected. That cannot be ignored and does not appear to have been addressed in any capacity.

**CHAIR**—Thank you for that. Mr Anderson.

**Mr Anderson**—I would like to make a few points about some of the evidence that we have heard here today. I walked in when Mr Quinlan and Mr Corbell were giving their evidence. Mr Corbell mentioned that Weston Creek had employment opportunities, which may or may not be the case. There certainly are not, to my knowledge, any Commonwealth or ACT government offices in Weston Creek that employ large numbers of staff.

**CHAIR**—The AFP?

**Mr Anderson**—Perhaps AFP. But you mentioned that in relation to spouse employment opportunities. To my knowledge, most people who live in Weston Creek travel to Woden, Tuggeranong or into the centre of the city to go to work each day. In that case, the spouses would require a car to do that because the bus service connecting Weston Creek to the city, and Tuggeranong in particular, is not adequate.

I also wanted to reiterate what Michelle said about the medium density housing on the block. While it is true that there are some areas of Stirling and Chapman, which is an adjacent suburb, that do have medium density townhouse-type developments, certainly there is none of that at all with the block that is under consideration—they are all free-standing houses. Indeed the surrounding areas of the site are all parkland. Also there is a high school and a retirement village where there is very little car necessity or little traffic impact.

Michelle touched on the fact that there is a lot of sport that happens in that area. There are actually two Australian Rules football fields, a number of netball courts, and also a couple of rugby league fields that necessitate—as you could imagine on Saturdays and Sundays and also

during the week for training—quite a lot of traffic movement. The car parks that service particularly the netball courts and one of the Australian Rules fields are far from adequate. It is not uncommon for Streeton Drive, in particular the areas that would be directly in front of the proposed development, to have cars parked there for quite a considerable length of time, particularly on Saturday mornings. What happens with the cars that will no longer be able to park in those positions? I do not know.

With regard to traffic calming measures, the roundabouts would be an improvement on what was previously recommended. However, I do notice that there are some direct access driveways. Because we live directly opposite the four of them on the north side of the development, I can assure anyone—particularly regarding the one furthest to the left of the diagram—that it would be an extremely dangerous access driveway. There are at the moment native shrubs for the previous kilometre on that left-hand side. In my opinion, anyone trying to turn right from that driveway would be putting their lives in danger. We live at No. 9, that block opposite, and we have to turn left to go into Streeton Drive in the morning and that is sometimes quite a hazardous exercise. Turning right in the evenings, coming back again with the flow of traffic, you quite often have people coming very close to the rear of your vehicle. It is almost a blind corner but not quite. That is something that might need consideration as well.

One other thing that I was interested in in the DHA evidence was that they mentioned that not all the residents would actually be attending the college; that some of them would be going to other facilities in the ACT. I would put it that the majority of defence personnel in the ACT would work in Russell Offices, in which case there is ample land surrounding Russell and Duntroon that may be considered as an alternative site.

**CHAIR**—Mr Anderson, this is your property here?

**Mr Anderson**—That is right, yes.

**CHAIR**—Committee: questions?

**Mr FORREST**—Ms Holmes, which one is yours?

**Ms Holmes**—Third from the corner.

**Mr FORREST**—You are both at 9?

**Ms Holmes**—Yes.

**Mr Anderson**—We are partners. We have got a fair degree of experience of the difficulties of moving in and out of our own property. I feel sorry for anyone else—

**CHAIR**—In relation to your petition which you referred to and which we have a copy of—

**Mr FORREST**—A lot of the addresses are not in Weston.

**Mr Anderson**—No. Michelle and I attended a normal netball competition day on a Saturday morning and a lot of the people whose children were playing in teams there were not residents of Weston Creek. But we did ask them if they used Streeton Drive on any occasion, either going to or returning from work or going to or returning from the shopping centre, because Weston Creek, as Michelle mentioned, has a Woolworths supermarket which is very popular.

**Mr FORREST**—Do you think if they were shown that plan with the roundabouts they would still sign this petition?

**Ms Holmes**—I think there is still a parking issue for people using the sporting grounds, which Peter referred to before. There is a significant problem, because currently the parking goes down well beyond our house on the weekends.

**CHAIR**—But the parking issue is there whether this development goes ahead or not. Is that right?

**Ms Holmes**—Yes, there is still a parking issue but, if this development goes ahead, quite clearly there is going to be reduced parking.

**CHAIR**—How many signatories to this petition are directly affected by this project?

**Ms Holmes**—There are quite a few people who live in the Weston Creek area who are directly affected by the project. Residents in Stirling who back onto this area are directly affected. Residents who live across the road in that strip, as we do, are affected. People who live north of Bangalay Crescent on Streeton Drive have also been very active because they will be affected, as will residents who live at the other end of Streeton Drive. So there is a significant number of residents who will be directly affected by this proposal.

**Mr Anderson**—From my point of view, the residents that live in Stirling, Chapman and Rivett would be the most directly affected.

**CHAIR**—Part of your evidence said that this would ‘significantly’ devalue the properties of residents of Streeton Drive, yet you have known that this land has been properly zoned since 1993 for this development.

**Ms Holmes**—No, I did not realise that. We bought our house in 1992. I was not aware it was zoned as residential. Interestingly, at some of these Weston Creek community meetings it became quite obvious that very few of the residents realised that the land had been zoned as residential.

**CHAIR**—I have got to say—having visited the site this morning—that, if I were purchasing your house and did not check, I would have the same view that it looked like public open space.

**Ms Holmes**—When we bought the house it was not zoned as residential.

**Mr Anderson**—I guess this might even be a reflection on the consultative process—

**CHAIR**—So you did not know that it was rezoned?

**Ms Holmes**—No.

**Mr Anderson**—No, we were not aware of it. Michelle and I think we are fairly well advised people; we read the paper quite often and listen to what is said in the meetings.

**CHAIR**—Do you accept the zoning is—

**Mr FORREST**—It is not an issue that our committee can deal with.

**Mr Anderson**—No, we are not trying to raise it as an issue.

**Ms Holmes**—No.

**CHAIR**—What is your response to the fact that you live on what is almost an arterial road? Will this really change the valuation of your property?

**Mr Anderson**—There are two points there. Firstly, I would like to see some evidence from DHA of the history of residential values adjacent to such developments in the rest of Australia—how they have affected those. Secondly, the interesting thing from the ACT government's point of view is that they obviously realise that Streeton Drive and the Cotter Road are used as an alternative transport route for city commuters, particularly in the mornings. As a consequence, they made an allocation in their last budget to duplicate a section of the carriageway on the Cotter Road, which at the moment is only a single lane. So obviously they consider there is considerable pressure on that alternative route to a freeway.

**CHAIR**—The first point in your representation to the committee was that infrastructure in the Weston Creek area currently is not sufficient to support the current population. What evidence do you have for that?

**Mr Anderson**—We shop at Woolworths every night between 5 and 6.30 and it is not a pleasant experience.

**CHAIR**—So, in terms of infrastructure, you did not mean water supply and sewerage?

**Mr Anderson**—No. I know there have been quite a lot of sewerage and water treatment works that have happened since we moved in eight years ago, and that certainly has improved the incidences of local flooding, for example. It is the shopping, I think, that is a big consideration.

**Ms Holmes**—Shopping, buses and density of traffic during peak periods.

**CHAIR**—I will be guided by the secretariat, but there were some residents on Streeton Drive who had no contact with DHA or the committee whatsoever. Why do you think that is so?

**Ms Holmes**—I do not understand what you are asking—they had no contact.

**CHAIR**—Meaning that there was no objection; they do not object to it.

**Ms Holmes**—I think you will find that we have been quite active in trying to distribute information on this situation, and you will find that people have a range of different living situations. You have got some very elderly residents, some whose health is not particularly good, who have more immediate day-to-day concerns than this. You have very busy families. Often we had comments like ‘What is the point because they are going to do it anyway,’ and I think that is quite sad. Maybe that is the case, that it will happen anyway, but people do have a right to put forward their opinion and sometimes people just do not feel that their opinion will be heard.

**Mr Anderson**—We had a protest in the street a couple of months ago, and I would say that 75 per cent of the residents who directly front the proposed development would have been participating in that. To answer the question more directly, there may be a number of houses that are rented in the area and therefore they are not so concerned.

**Mr FORREST**—A lot of the people have said, ‘We hate speed humps, get rid of the speed humps.’ I hate them too, but if they saw that plan those who have signed it from outside the area who use Streeton Drive would probably say, ‘All right,’ and not sign it.

**Mr Anderson**—Quite possibly.

**Ms Holmes**—I do not really know.

**Mr FORREST**—There is a whole page with no humps.

**Ms Holmes**—Nobody has had an opportunity to look at this proposal, so how could we possibly comment on that? I think perhaps a consultation phase would be very useful so you could actually get comments directly from people. The only reason that you have this is because we ourselves have gone to the effort of gathering it to present it to people to consider. I think it would be valuable to authorise DHA or whatever the organisation is to actually undertake some consultation with people and collect their views on this proposal.

**CHAIR**—Ms Holmes and Mr Anderson, thank you for your evidence this afternoon.

It is proposed that the documents listed on the sheet that has been circulated to the members of the committee be 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**—Ladies and gentlemen, to all of you who have attended today and to those who have given evidence, thank you for appearing before the committee today and thank you to all of those who assisted with our inspection, and particularly to our two local MLAs who came along. We appreciate your input as well.

Resolved (on motion by **Senator Murphy**):

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

**Committee adjourned at 12.34 p.m.**

