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JOINT COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS

Reference: Enoggera Army Barracks - Housing Redevelopment

FRIDAY, 21 SEPTEMBER 2001

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JOINT COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS

Friday, 21 September 2001

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: Mr Hollis and Mrs Moylan

Terms of reference for the inquiry:

Enoggera Army Barracks – housing redevelopment.

WITNESSES

CHRISMAS, Mr Rodney Gordon, Managing Director, James Cubitt Architects Pty Ltd.....	1
MORGAN, Mr Gregory, Senior Environmental Consultant, URS Australia Pty Ltd.....	1
MURDOCH, Mrs Sandra Helen, South Queensland National Delegate, National Consultative Group of Service Families	15
STORRS, Mr Robert Charles, Project Environmental Scientist, URS Australia Pty Ltd.....	1

Committee met at 10.06 a.m.

CHRISMAS, Mr Rodney Gordon, Managing Director, James Cubitt Architects Pty Ltd

MORGAN, Mr Gregory, Senior Environmental Consultant, URS Australia Pty Ltd

STORRS, Mr Robert Charles, Project Environmental Scientist, URS Australia Pty Ltd

CHAIR—I declare open this public hearing into the proposed housing redevelopment at Enoggera, Brisbane. The project was referred to the Public Works Committee on 8 August 2001 for consideration and report to the parliament. 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.

We have had an earlier briefing—a private briefing—and also an inspection of the site of the proposed work. The committee will take evidence from the Defence Housing Authority and the South Queensland area of the National Consultative Group of Service Families. I thank the Defence Housing Authority for the briefing and also for arranging the site inspection this morning. The committee has received a submission and one supplementary submission from the Defence Housing Authority. These submissions, together with others received by the committee, are available in a volume of submissions for the inquiry. They are also available on the committee's web site. Does the Defence Housing Authority wish to propose amendments to any of the submissions it has made to the committee so far?

Mr Lyon—Yes. I have some additional material that I would like to put forward to the committee. Firstly, I would like to thank the committee for coming to Brisbane to help deal with this particular project. I know the airline difficulties have been an additional burden, and we very much appreciate that. I would also like to record the appreciation of Mr Hollis, who has been on the committee for a very long time. I understand that this will be his last public committee hearing. On behalf of all the people who have been on this side of the table, I would just like to thank him for that contribution. Also, it is fairly rare that we are able to have a director—an independent director—from the board of DHA. We are particularly pleased that Helen Ryan is here today.

CHAIR—I now invite you to make a brief opening statement to the committee, after which we will proceed to some questions.

Mr Lyon—DHA seeks PWC approval to proceed with a residential development at Enoggera which adjoins the barracks, as we saw this morning. Enoggera is a rapid response deployment facility. Close housing to the units is very much preferred by members of the ADF who work there. The site will offer defence members and their families a secure suburban environment within six kilometres of the Brisbane central business district, with good access to community facilities such as shops, schools, public transport and recreational facilities.

At the end of the financial year 2001, DHA managed a total of 1,124 properties in Brisbane. The defence housing forecast for Brisbane as at 1 July has seen an increase to 1,320, a requirement that is seen to be steady over the remainder of the next three years. DHA's capital program covering the next three years not only takes into account the defence housing forecast but also the need to replace older, substandard stock, and particularly expiring leases, which are included in the material shown on the board.

The proposed redevelopment involves the reconfiguration of allotments within an established development. The proposal is governed to a very large extent by the constraints imposed by the original development, which include the site location, orientation, topography and road geometry. Although the site is serviced with the current stormwater drainage and sewerage, reticulation will require upgrading to Brisbane City Council standards as part of the project, along with upgrading of electrical, communication and gas services.

In our submission, a community park is proposed for inclusion in the redevelopment. The site selected is centrally located within the redevelopment and is easily accessible from all proposed allotments. Following discussions with the Brisbane City Council, and in the light of representations from local residents, the area allocated for the community park has been increased from 1,095 metres to 2,000 metres.

Further, it has been necessary to rearrange the allotments around the gully in the north-west corner of the site, resulting in one less proposed allotment in that particular area. This is due to the location of a stormwater drain in that area. The plan, as revised, has gained the support and approval of the Brisbane City Council. Given the increase in the size of the community park and the rearrangement of the north-western corner, the proposal is now for 66 allotments, three less than originally submitted. The original cost of the proposal is reduced to \$15.5 million.

The DHA board has given its approval for the project to be submitted to the PWC for consideration and report. Subject to the committee's endorsement and also the parliamentary endorsement, which we need to follow, and final approval by the board, the construction program is planned to commence in April next year, with delivery of the completed dwellings planned for December 2002, or in time for the next posting cycle for Enoggera.

CHAIR—We will go to Mr Hollis first.

Mr HOLLIS—I see in the evidence that the defence housing forecast for Brisbane has seen an increase in requirements from 1,320. What assumptions have led you to believe that there is going to be this increased need for defence housing in Brisbane?

Mr Lyon—We have advice from the defence department of some changes in units.

Mr Kennedy—It is the defence forecast that we take for the increase of military personnel to the Enoggera base. That forecast is on a five-year plan, and it is confirmed every year. That is the forecast that we have.

Mr HOLLIS—But this submission here of 65 houses is not going to cover that. So what other proposals does defence housing have in the Brisbane area?

Mr Kennedy—The other proposals that are planned—we have to meet the market wherever we can to find the houses to replace the leases that are due to expire. So apart from construction programs where land is available, we also seek to lease houses directly from the public and also to purchase houses that have been constructed by individual builders—spec homes, basically.

Mr HOLLIS—What is defence housing policy on the mix between on-base and off-base houses?

Mr Lyon—We have no houses here on base. All the housing is provided off base. There is accommodation on the base for single members, but this development is for married members. The primary reason for this development relates to the need to provide housing closer to the base. Also, it is in the context of some 530 leases expiring over the next three years. So it is more to do with the replacement of stock than it is to do with significant changes in the defence housing forecast.

Mr HOLLIS—Mr Lyon, you were kind enough to make comment in your introduction that I have been on this committee for a long time. I have been on it for a long time. I must say that I think this is the first hearing I have ever attended, especially with defence housing, where there has not been either a community submission or a community input. One of the first things I do when I get my papers is look through to see—either from an environmental point of view or some other point of view—if there are any community submissions. And you always know whether you are going to have a rough hearing or a long hearing or a short hearing, and you plan your day accordingly. When I looked through here, I could not find anything. In fact, I remarked to the chair earlier that I was quite surprised that we had no community submission. Whether you have done such a good PR job here, or whether you have kept people in the dark, or what it is, I do not know.

CHAIR—I hope, Mr Hollis, that defence housing has taken note of our concerns about public consultation, that they have done such a good job that we do not have any problems.

Mr Lyon—It is certainly not a secret. I think Mr Bear could outline the efforts that he and Ms Kennedy have taken to involve the community. I think the fact is that this is not a controversial proposal.

Mr Bear—We have done quite a lot of work, and we do take on board what the committee has said to us in the past. We have worked with local government officials. Our HMC managers worked with Councillor Anne Benson, local members of parliament, et cetera cetera, because they had been receiving representations, and we were able to assist them in replying to those representations.

We held a publicly advertised meeting, which was attended by 30-odd people, and they raised various concerns which we were able to address, thus the reason for some amendments to our process. I also, prior to this hearing, letter-boxed every house in the area—200 houses in the area—and we opened our office, just across the road, which is adjoining the subdivision, and invited people in to view what we were doing, to talk about what we were doing and to hear their concerns. The concerns that people had were generally about the tree that was in their backyard or what we were doing about traffic or what we were doing about the size of the park. We were able to talk them through what we were doing, and they expressed satisfaction.

I think one of the other things to mention here is that this is a redevelopment. So we are not taking a greenfield site and developing it. It is an area that has had houses before. It is in an older area where people have come to know that there were houses before, and there has always been an expectation that there will be houses there again. So I think that is the reason.

One thing that some members of the public did mention to me was that it was in the morning when the hearing was on, and they were at work, and they would not be able to attend. I offered to represent—if they cared to write to me—any information that they would like brought to attention, and none was forthcoming.

Mr HOLLIS—Could you take us through paragraph 15(1) under ‘energy conservation’. It says:

Energy conservation was a prime design consideration. All houses will be required to provide optimal passive solar performance and achieve a maximum of four-star energy rating.

What does it all mean?

Mr Cruttenden—There is a requirement for the Defence Housing Authority to have a four-star energy rating on all their houses. The houses are classified from one to five stars in accordance with a determined system, of which there are a number available to use. The higher the star number, the more efficient the house is. Five stars can be obtained. It is extremely hard, though, and requires careful siting and design. The authority is currently using four stars as an Australia-wide basis to satisfy that requirement.

Mr HOLLIS—Does that include solar heating?

Mr Cruttenden—Further north, because DHA covers such a wide geographical area, in extreme tropical areas, such as Cairns, Darwin and Tindal, we do use solar heating for hot water services. Because we are building in three geographical areas, we classify our houses as temperate, subtropical and tropical. Brisbane is currently in what we call the subtropical region. So there are certain design elements in the Brisbane houses to satisfy that need.

Mr HOLLIS—They are the ones I am interested in. What does that mean? Does it mean that they are sited a certain way on the block?

Mr Cruttenden—Yes, that is correct. We are generally looking for the long side of the house to take a northern aspect. We are looking to minimise the number or size of windows facing the west—the setting sun—where the strong summer heat comes from. We are looking for the

family rooms and living rooms to be northerly oriented to take in the low rising winter sun. They would then not be affected by the summer sun, which is nearly vertically overhead at midday. So the design of the house basically is open to let the winter sun in, avoid the hot summer sun, and also to avoid the setting western sun at the same time.

Mr HOLLIS—Tell me about the park. When we had the inspection there this morning, I was aware of the trees on the site. I was also aware of the very good position of the site. I was also aware that I would not regard the soil as particularly good soil. In fact, I was quite surprised that that many trees grew there, given the look of the soil. The park is going to be at the bottom there. It would seem to me that there is going to be some sort of cost involved if the drawing or the painting I have seen there is to come to fruition. It most certainly will not come to fruition on the soil that is already there. So I would imagine there would have to be some sort of importation of soil or something like that.

Mr Bear—There is included in the cost of \$15.5 million money for developing the park and ensuring that it is appropriately treed and grassed. Then we have an arrangement with the Brisbane City Council that, once that is completed, it will hand over to them for ongoing maintenance. But certainly, it will not just be left there as it is. It will be professionally developed. We have employed a landscape consultant to take us through that process and to ensure that it is done in a sensible manner and that the trees that are planted are suitable for the site. We are very much aware of the point you make. There are certain trees that grow there well and there are certain trees that do not.

Mr HOLLIS—I see from the report that there are no heritage concerns about the site.

Mr Bear—There are no heritage issues associated with the site.

Mr HOLLIS—That is all I have at the moment.

CHAIR—Can I first congratulate you on having conducted that community consultation process, obviously very well from the outset, because it certainly makes the committee's job much easier. I think we have had problems before with some agencies not doing that and it just slows down the process quite a bit.

Mr Bear—It speeds up the process if you do it right; and it is an enjoyable process, I have to say.

CHAIR—I am sure it is—a much better outcome overall.

Mr Bear—Much better.

CHAIR—Anyway, congratulations on that. There are a couple of questions that I would like to ask about the design and layout of the development. I notice that the blocks in this development are quite long and narrow. What have you done to satisfy the aesthetic considerations in this development in the design?

Mr Cruttenden—The proposed subdivision plan is in accordance with the Brisbane City Council's current planning guidelines. The very nature of the subdivision taking narrow blocks—the original land form was of the very long blocks, which were relatively narrow.

CHAIR—Can you just tell us what the frontage is on, on average? Twelve metres?

Mr Cruttenden—Twelve metres; that is correct. That satisfies current BCC planning policy. They have a policy for that. It has not been our intention to step outside standardised policy in this case on that matter. The architectural design elements of the buildings, of course, then lend themselves to a relatively narrow frontage, which ends up with a design challenge to deal with the garages. Otherwise you just end up with a street full of garage doors looking at you. I believe the design resolution that we have come up with basically suppresses the frontal aspect of that garage. So that is a direct amenity issue.

CHAIR—You did explain to us on the site today about that. Could you just for the record tell us how you have done that?

Mr Cruttenden—Actually, I was not the person explaining it on the site.

CHAIR—Could you give an outline of how you have dealt with the aesthetics, given the nature of the development?

Mr Christmas—As was mentioned earlier, the sites average around 12 metres in width and are long, because of the nature of the existing sites. In setting out the houses on each particular site, we decided that one of the issues that we could examine was the possibility of having a zero lot line. A zero lot line means that you can build part of a wall along a portion of the length of the site. So we adopted the process of allowing the garage component to undertake that process. The balance of the house was then allocated to prescribed setbacks, side setbacks.

CHAIR—Did I understand you to say this morning that the garages are actually recessed slightly back?

Mr Christmas—Yes, but just in terms of the basic footprint; that is how we established that. In certain cases, they are two storeys. Wherever we have a two-storey component we have endeavoured to have the two-storey component partially overhang the garage, as the garage is recessed, and to identify as clearly as possible the front door. So you are not walking around a corner to access a house but you are readily invited into the main entry door by it being more present than the garage door. Colour and texture will assist in the process, and in certain cases we are having garage doors that are single and double so you are getting a little bit of variety, and there will be variety in colour and material.

CHAIR—Thank you. The other question I wanted to ask—and we talked about it briefly on site—is that certainly in some projects in the past they have been what you would call innovative, and I think this is innovative and I personally think it looks very attractive. I like the modern design of the housing. In the past we have sometimes seen these developments become a problem. I think the one that we saw up in Darwin was such, in terms of the aesthetics of the housing and the resale appeal and also in terms of the ongoing maintenance. Can you tell us

what kind of market research might have been done to determine whether these properties are going to maintain their values?

Mr Christmas—Our approach was to design houses that we believed reflected the requirements of DHA as well as being suitable for the actual sites themselves. As far as market research is concerned, that is something we did not undertake—to analyse those sorts of considerations—but through our own experience and skills we believe that we have been able to respond to conditions like sustainability, buildings that are attractive, an environment that is attractive and that will be enhanced very much by the landscaping and the materials that we actually use. As far as the broader community being interested in living there is concerned, that is always an issue that we are mindful of. We believe that the layouts that we have produced respond to environmental conditions and climatic conditions and, therefore, will be attractive to the users and, optimistically, for subsequent resale.

Mr Bear—We did present the plans and the way the development is going ahead to the professional property valuers, Herriots, and asked them to look at the properties from a potential sale point of view and to place values on them. The values that they have placed on them are consistent in the market with what we expect could be achieved and the values are consistent with other properties.

CHAIR—Okay, thank you. I get concerned a bit about the ongoing maintenance because of what we saw happen in Darwin where you now are finding that those properties are not suitable for people to live in. There was a lot of money spent on making them innovative in their design and the cost now of maintaining them is enormously high. I think they are the kind of things that have to be taken into consideration in the expenditure of public moneys.

Mr Lyon—We are conscious of that, because we expect to maintain these houses for quite a considerable period of time. Indeed, we are unlikely to move to sell these houses because it is so difficult to get access to land close to the base. The property management side of our business is a large part of our operations.

CHAIR—So do you consider the ongoing maintenance of materials used, design and so on?

Mr Lyon—We certainly do. That gets involved in discussions like: to what extent do you put carpet in compared with tiles? A whole range of issues like that are debated.

CHAIR—Even external wear and tear—painting and other problems?

Mr Lyon—Yes, that is right. A consideration here for this particular style was that Enoggera, as a suburb, is in the process of redevelopment. There is a style that we were pretty keen to pick up as part of that redevelopment.

CHAIR—Can I just welcome Major General Jim Molan. I am sorry for any inconvenience with us starting a little earlier.

Major Gen. Molan—I was a bit surprised, but thank you.

CHAIR—I would just like to cover some of the energy conservation issues. We have just heard Mr Hollis ask some questions about the energy rating, and I think that it is important that we look at those things. Have you had any consultations with the Australian Greenhouse Office, because it is a requirement now for all government agencies to consult to ensure that we have the most efficient designs in terms of energy consumption in order to meet Australia's requirement to reduce greenhouse gases?

Mr Bear—There has been no direct consultation on this development. However, we do keep ourselves informed—and that was part of what we did with Duntroon—as to what their requirements are, and we are working to be within those requirements. Their basic requirement is that all government housing must have a four or better rating. We work to that model to ensure that we have those sorts of ratings.

CHAIR—We might be recommending that you actually do directly consult with the Australian Greenhouse Office in order that the project does meet the government's requirements to reduce greenhouse gas emission. Because it is a relatively new agency, I think everyone is still kind of catching up with it. But I think we will be looking at that pretty closely.

Mr Bear—They have published a lot of material and we keep abreast of it. We have no objection to doing that.

CHAIR—Okay. The other question that I had was in relation to the environmental issues and, in particular, to this report that you have had done. Just for the record, can you tell us who conducted the environmental assessment?

Mr Bear—URS. That is their trading name: URS.

CHAIR—And also for the record, did you consult with representatives of the Department of Environment and Heritage regarding your determination that the proposal is not a controlled action?

Mr Bear—Yes, we did.

CHAIR—Thank you. In terms of the report, I noticed in the recommendations in section 5.1 that in the first paragraph the report says:

It is recommended that the natural soil and rock at the site be left *in-situ*, given that the arsenic concentrations appear to be naturally occurring.

So there is nothing definite about that in this report—about whether it is or not; it just says 'appear to be'. It continues:

It would be prudent for future landowners to be advised of the presence of elevated concentration of arsenic in the natural soil to minimise the potential for adverse human health impacts by excess soil ingestion or use of home grown fruit and vegetables.

Can you tell us whether you are proposing to get further advice on whether the arsenic is naturally occurring or whether it is coming from some other source? Secondly, are you

proposing to advise occupiers and future landowners of anything on that site of the presence of arsenic in the natural soil?

Mr Bear—Matters of this nature require that we consult with the Environmental Protection Agency. Our consultants, URS, have been in close consultation with the Environmental Protection Agency in the preparation of this report. This report has now gone to the Environmental Protection Agency for assessment and comment. Depending upon their assessment and comment, we will determine exactly our next steps. The process, as I understand it, is that they will determine whether this site is required to go on to the environmentally managed register. If they determine that, there are then further steps that have to be followed, such as management plans for the site, what sort of activities should be carried on the site and what sort of notifications should be undertaken. It is our intention to continue to undertake that work, but we are seeking to have the EPA input first to just strengthen the direction in which we might take that further work.

Mr HOLLIS—I must say that this does cause us some concern. When you say you are waiting for the outcome of a report, what I have always found with environmental reports and everything—it is a bit of a Pandora's box—is that if that report comes back and says certain remediation work has to be done to that site, that will blow your projected costings right out the window. In my area we had some soil pollutants there and people were advised not to eat their own vegetables. That just caused unbelievable problems—fear in the community and at considerable cost.

Mr Bear—I understand where you are coming from. Because we have identified it and because we have been having a lengthy, ongoing talk to the EPA, it is not as if we just prepared this report and then dropped it in their office. There has been a lot of discussion. We believe the answer will be that it is not of concern. If we thought there was any chance that it was going to be of significant concern, then clearly you would have a different attitude. But our consultant has been liaising with them extensively in the steps that they are going through so that the material that is being prepared is in accordance with their requirements. However, they now have the document. They are doing their own internal assessment of it and will come back to us.

Mr HOLLIS—I wonder if I could ask the military personnel here, Brigadier McIntosh and Major General Molan, if they were consulted about this report at all.

Major Gen. Molan— No, I was not.

Brig. McIntosh— I have not been consulted about the report. We have been consulted about the development. We have provided input into that, but I have not seen the report.

Mr HOLLIS—I do not want to blow this thing out. If it is naturally occurring on that site, it is naturally occurring on a whole lot of other areas and there have been houses there, as you rightly identified before, for many years and there are also well-established suburbs or houses all around. So I do not want to blow the whole thing out of proportion. But you must in the back of your mind or somewhere have a contingency plan for how you will deal with it. If I came in there as a military person or wanted to live there and I had this spanking new modern house on a bit of rocky soil, what sort of plan would there be? It is natural today that people do grow things there. One of the first things people want to do is put in a few carrots and a few radishes

and grow a rose or two. If you are saying, 'Don't eat your radishes. Grow them, just admire them.' What would you be planning to do? I know that you have not got final details, but would you be thinking of putting new soil there, or what?

Mr Lyon—I think the first point is that we are still going through the process. While we believe the results will be that it will be naturally occurring thing that is prevalent in the suburb, that is yet to be determined. The second thing is that we have Professor Moore from the National Health and Medical Research Institute of Toxicology who is advising us on how to deal with this. The third thing is that, obviously, this will be an issue that the board of DHA will be very concerned about before it decides to approve the project. I think, like you, I would have great difficulties in recommending to the board to proceed with the project on a range of grounds in the event that people could not do the normal sorts of things that you would expect to do in a suburban environment.

Mr HOLLIS—I accept all of that and I support it. I know that I am harping on it a bit, but my one concern about this project, which I think is a good project, is that if an adverse finding came back, your financial calculations are shot.

Mr Lyon—Absolutely, and we would not be recommending to the board of DHA to proceed. This is an issue that will be certainly considered in detail by the board. It is just that, at this point in time, this is an issue that we have not got fully sorted out. While we are not expecting to be facing insurmountable issues, we are drawing it to the committee's attention, because that is the correct way to operate.

Mr HOLLIS—Okay. We have the commercial-in-confidence things here in front of us and we are not going to put it on the public record, but with a project like this, the contingency amount is very low. You must be very confident that you can bring this to fruition with having just that amount for contingency?

Mr Lyon—Yes, we are. It does not deal with the particular issue that we were just discussing—

Mr HOLLIS—No.

Mr Lyon— about risk from that particular area—but this is very much a straightforward development. We have already taken soundings. We know and have a good appreciation of housing construction costs. We believe that is an appropriate contingency.

Mr HOLLIS—That is good.

Mr Lyon—It is one of the areas that we have put a lot of work in to be quite strong in terms of bringing projects in on cost.

Mr HOLLIS—I must say that, over the years, I have seen contingency sums come down considerably. I am usually looking at this and saying, 'That seems to be very high. How much padding is in there?', and so forth. It is one of the few times that I have expressed concern that it may be a little on the low side.

Mr Lyon—We are a government business enterprise and we have a very strong board that has particular financial skills. We simply do not provide people like Mr Cruttenden with leeway to build things into the houses as part of the approach. We take a very strong, disciplined approach to cost.

CHAIR—Do you expect any programming risks to occur because of the lack of definitive information to date on the arsenic contamination?

Mr Lyon—No, I do not, simply because, as we heard earlier, we are not really anticipating any surprises.

CHAIR—What about delays in getting information from EPA?

Mr Lyon—Again, I do not think that we have got any indication that that is likely to be a significant issue.

CHAIR—But you cannot actually start the project until that matter is cleared up.

Mr Lyon—Precisely.

CHAIR—Have you allowed a time factor in there for achieving that?

Mr Lyon—Yes. We are expecting to start this project next year.

Mr Bear—Construction will not start until April. We would expect to meet the December 2002 deadline. Working back from there, we would like to have things started in April, which means that we would want to start the tendering process in late February-March. We are now in September. We believe that that is sufficient time to do it—also understanding that there has been a long and lengthy discussion with the EPA and that we have now met and given them the things that they have asked for. They are working through it and we are finding them very helpful.

CHAIR—Thank you.

Mr HOLLIS—Going back to the actual houses themselves, I notice that they are all four-bedroom houses. Is there any reason that you would go for four bedrooms? In every other project there is usually a mix of, say, three bedrooms, four bedrooms. Is this what you need, or what?

Mr Kennedy—Yes, it is directly targeted at four bedrooms for the classification of the officer who will occupy the house where we have the greatest need. Currently houses are allocated according to rank and family structure. The biggest demand, the biggest need, is for four-bedroomed homes for families of the lower rank, the middle rank.

CHAIR—Can I perhaps ask Major Molan and Brigadier McIntosh your general view of the development, both from—

Major Gen. Molan—I think that it is a good development. I think one of the best aspects of the development for us is its location. That really is a bonus for us.

CHAIR—Are you happy with the housing designs and styles?

Major Gen. Molan— The details—I might let Pat speak on that. I have responsibility for five of the bases like this.

CHAIR—Have you been consulted?

Major Gen. Molan—I have not been consulted in detail. I think the brigade commander has been consulted in some more detail. The only concern that I would raise is that, as a tenant not 200 metres away from this area, I notice that different standards are applied to landscaping of different levels of DHA houses. Although you can certainly legitimately establish a level of landscaping, which will take five or 10 years to develop to hide all the back fences and to provide some privacy in that area, in the particular area that I am in the level of landscaping is such that it does not provide that. Yet in other areas DHA housing, after a number of years it does provide that. The only concern that I have in relation to this is to know what level of landscaping will be applied to this.

CHAIR—It looks to be fairly extensive from what we have seen, and landscape consultants have been engaged.

Major Gen. Molan—Yes. It would be nice to be reassured. I do not know whether the street full of houses that I particularly live in were subject to the same assurances by landscape people as this group is, but I would very much like to see whatever is given as an assurance for the soldiers to live in, when this thing is actually on the ground, that that standard of landscaping does appear.

CHAIR—So your concern rests to some degree with privacy issues.

Major Gen. Molan—Absolutely, yes.

CHAIR—Perhaps we could have Brigadier McIntosh comment and then perhaps Defence could respond.

Brig. McIntosh— I have been consulted about the location of the site, and I would like to thank DHA for listening to our concerns. Enoggera is a very popular location. One of the reasons it is popular is because it is close to some excellent schools and it is close to public transport. What we find is that people get posted to Enoggera with families and then have to live in housing that is a long way away from the barracks. Then they have difficulty getting to very good schools that happen to exist just outside of the barracks. So we have been consulted in that and I appreciate the effort that has been made to bring this development on line, and to bring it on line as quickly as they intend to do it.

I have not been consulted about the standard of the house that is going to be built. The reason for that is that I have not really inquired, because generally we are very happy with the standard of DHA housing and I do not have any concerns from any of my people about the standard of

the housing. The only concerns that are expressed to me is about the location of the housing. This development is really going a long way to help alleviate that kind of concern.

I would support the building of the four-bedroom houses, because they are in short demand and the kinds of families that we would like to see living in this development would be those who do have a number of children, because of the advantage of education, as I mentioned before.

CHAIR—We have taken evidence before as well that, with many defence families, you have got one or two people studying, and studies are quite important as well.

Brig. McIntosh— That is right.

CHAIR—Would you like to respond to the concern about landscaping?

Mr Lyon—Firstly, I am aware that there are particular issues with the general's house.

Major Gen. Molan—I am not bringing my house—it is the whole street of houses in which I live.

Mr Lyon—There are particular issues in that area, which we do need to address. With regard to this project—

Mr Bear—If I could just take it back one step. In the papers that we have made available, we did do some survey work of tenants, which we are continually doing. One of the things that comes through those surveys—and that influences the way we go about things—is that they want low maintenance lawns and gardens, they like the idea of a small yard and they like security, and that flows through there. This is something that we are now doing a lot more frequently than we may have done in years gone by. That drives the way that we go about developing and the way we go about setting up a property.

In this particular one, there were some concerns expressed about privacy. We are maintaining as many of the trees across the backs of blocks, so that becomes part of the process. Secondly, as you have mentioned, we have engaged a landscape architect planner to be involved in the process. We have included in that \$15.5 million money to ensure that that is done properly. We are very keen that the pictures that we have seen and the drawings are what you are going to get. These are not drawings where we are saying, 'Trust me.' We have in place the steps to make that occur.

I might also add that we now also use the services of an interior design expert. So we do not have builders picking interior designs and colours and tiles to suit their need. We are also finding that, in recent developments that we have undertaken since we have adopted those processes, the tenants are applauding those selections. So there is an effort now to engage specialist consultants right through the process. As we have done with the costing where we have a quantity surveyor, we now move through the process with a professional interior designer, professional landscape people and so on right through the process. We believe that, with our surveys of tenants and addressing it in that manner, we will achieve their aspirations in that regard.

Mr HOLLIS—There has been some concern in the papers and other places about traffic flows and so on. I think you have done some studies or have some plans to alleviate this problem.

Mr Bear—The development adjoins the rear entrance to the base. It depends on where you live. It can be seen as busy at certain times. Most of the people working at the base tend to arrive at work between 6.45 and 7.30 in the morning. We have done some traffic counting there. We believe that there are up to 120-odd vehicles per quarter of an hour during that period, which by different people's standards might be high or low. However, to address that and to address the concerns of some residents, we have been in consultation with the traffic experts at the Brisbane City Council. We have also engaged an independent traffic expert who has done some traffic countings and some drawings and we have developed a plan for some slight modifications to the major intersection to address those fears. That particular plan and rearrangement of the intersection was one of the issues that we have also consulted with local residents about, particularly the ones living near it. I can faithfully report that it meets with their requirements.

Mr HOLLIS—Finally, in here there is something about a stormwater drain. I think that is that block that—

Mr Bear—Up in the top north-western part. In that area there we discovered that, due to the contour of the site—and you will recall that that is in the area where we were—there is an old stormwater system which picks up stormwater. We have therefore avoided building in that area and will rehabilitate the collection point so it is able to function as it should function.

CHAIR—Thank you very much.

[11.00 a.m.]

MURDOCH, Mrs Sandra Helen, South Queensland National Delegate, National Consultative Group of Service Families

CHAIR—Welcome. We have received a submission from you. The submission is available in a volume of submissions for the inquiry which is also available on the committee's web site. Do you wish to propose any amendment to the submission you have made to the committee?

Mrs Murdoch—No, only to reiterate what I said in my statement.

CHAIR—I invite you to make a short statement in support of your submission.

Mrs Murdoch—I would just like to reiterate what I said in my statement about the location and the importance of location and choice for families when they move into an area—things like transport, access to spouse employment, access to good schooling choices for the children and being close to the base to improve the quality of life so that when they do have some time off they can spend it with their families and not travelling. I believe the Enoggera area delivers all of those aspects.

CHAIR—Thank you. Can you describe for the record the involvement of the south Queensland area of the National Consultative Group of Service Families and the role that you have in the proposed redevelopment?

Mrs Murdoch—Basically, it is with Bronwyn. Bronwyn has involved me just to come in. She showed me the plans. We discussed the layout of the plans. I also attended the meeting with council when Bronwyn went to council. She has just basically asked for feedback on the actual proposed area.

CHAIR—How many service families would you be representing?

Mrs Murdoch—Basically from Rockhampton out to the Darling Downs, Toowoomba, Ipswich, Amberley and down as far as the New South Wales border, taking in Canungra and those areas.

CHAIR—So you represent a fair number of defence families in this locality?

Mrs Murdoch—Yes.

Mr HOLLIS—So you have no concerns about it as an occupier? There is nothing in the plans that you think is missing that should be there or anything?

Mrs Murdoch—No, I do not. I think DHA has done a wonderful job. I think the houses are terrific.

CHAIR—Unless Mr Hollis particularly wants to question the Defence Housing Authority further, I do not think we need to recall defence housing. So thank you very much. Before closing, I thank all the witnesses here today and the Defence Housing Authority for meeting us and giving us a private briefing and an inspection of the site and for assisting us in our work here today. It is necessary that the committee authorise the publication of evidence. I will ask Mr Hollis to do that.

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 the public hearing this day.

Committee adjourned at 11.02 a.m.