



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

**JOINT PARLIAMENTARY
COMMITTEE**

on

PUBLIC WORKS

**Reference: Development of infrastructure of the Townsville Field Training Area,
Townsville, Queensland**

TOWNSVILLE

Friday, 25 October 1996

OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT

CANBERRA

WITNESSES

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HARTLEY, Mr Rolfe George, Environmental Manager, Canberra Office, Kinhill Engineers Pty Ltd, 21 Barry Drive, Turner, Australian Capital Territory 2601 3

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LANS, Lieutenant Colonel Benjamin, Staff Officer Grade One, Training Area Design, Directorate of Plans, Army Headquarters, Department of Defence, Canberra, Australian Capital Territory 2601 3

McCANN, Brigadier Raymond Leslie, Director General, Accommodation and Works—Army, Facilities and Property Division, Department of Defence, Campbell Park Offices, Canberra, Australian Capital Territory 2600 3

MOON, Mr Eric John, Secretary, Upper Burdekin Progress Association, Mail Service 913, Burdekin Bridge, Charters Towers, Queensland 4820 69

STRACHAN, Lieutenant Colonel Olga Nina, Project Director, Facilities and Property Division, Department of Defence, Campbell Park Offices, Canberra, Australian Capital Territory 2600 3

JOINT COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS

(Subcommittee)

*Development of infrastructure of the Townsville Field Training Area, Townsville,
Queensland*

TOWNSVILLE

Friday, 25 October 1996

Present

Mr Andrew (Chair)

Mr Hatton

Mr Hollis

The subcommittee met at 9.00 a.m.

Mr Andrew took the chair.

CHAIR—I declare open this public hearing into the proposed development of infrastructure on the Townsville Field Training Area, Townsville, Queensland. I acknowledge the presence this morning of the member for Herbert, Mr Peter Lindsay and the Deputy Mayor of Townsville, Ms Ann Bunnell, who will appear later as a witness before the committee. The project was referred to the Public Works Committee for consideration and report to parliament by the House of Representatives on 21 August 1996.

In accordance with subsection 17(3) of the Public Works Committee Act 1969, in considering and reporting on a public work, the committee should 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.

Yesterday afternoon the committee flew by Black Hawk helicopter over the Townsville Field Training Area and inspected a number of sites at which it is proposed to construct various elements of the works in this reference. Today the committee will hear evidence from the Department of Defence, Townsville City Council and the Upper Burdekin Progress Association. I now call representatives from Department of Defence.

[9.01 a.m.]

DAWSON, Lieutenant Colonel Brian Robert, Commanding Officer, Base Area Support Centre—North Queensland, Department of Defence, Milpo Lavarack Barracks, Queensland 4813

LANS, Lieutenant Colonel Benjamin, Staff Officer Grade One, Training Area Design, Directorate of Plans, Army Headquarters, Department of Defence, Canberra, Australian Capital Territory 2601

McCANN, Brigadier Raymond Leslie, Director General, Accommodation and Works—Army, Facilities and Property Division, Department of Defence, Campbell Park Offices, Canberra, Australian Capital Territory 2600

STRACHAN, Lieutenant Colonel Olga Nina, Project Director, Facilities and Property Division, Department of Defence, Campbell Park Offices, Canberra, Australian Capital Territory 2600

HARTLEY, Mr Rolfe George, Environmental Manager, Canberra Office, Kinhill Engineers Pty Ltd, 21 Barry Drive, Turner, Australian Capital Territory 2601

CHAIR—The committee has received a submission from the Department of Defence dated August 1996. Do you wish to propose any amendments?

Brig. McCann—There are a couple of minor amendments: at paragraph 38, delete the word ‘convict’; at paragraph 42, second line, delete ‘Defence’ and insert ‘December’. At paragraph 56, delete the second sentence and insert in its place:

Arrangements have been made to brief representatives from the TFTA Environmental Management Advisory Committee during the period September-October 1996.

In addition, an amendment needs to be made to a letter from my office to the secretary of the committee. Can we do that at the moment before these letters are incorporated into the *Hansard* record?

CHAIR—It is appropriate to read that into the *Hansard* record now. The matter can then be considered to have been dealt with. If any committee member has an objection to the amendment you wish to make, they will have the opportunity to record that objection when I put the motion in a few moments.

Brig. McCann—I refer to a letter from the Department of Defence to the secretary of the committee, reference DGAW-A 1021/96 of 14 October 1996. At paragraph 3, second line, delete ‘10 per cent of revenue’. Add the additional sentence at the end of the paragraph to read:

This has since been reduced to \$11,600 for financial year 1996-97 as a result of the new grazing lease signed in August 1996.

CHAIR—It is proposed that the submission, as amended, 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—Would a representative of the Department of Defence now care to read the summary statement?

Brig. McCann—Thank you, Mr Chairman. The document reads:

This proposal seeks approval to develop infrastructure on the Townsville Field Training Area in North Queensland. It will allow up to brigade-sized formations to conduct manoeuvre and live fire training activities, and will ease environmental pressures within the High Range Training Area. The Townsville Field Training Area comprises the High Range Training Area and Dotswood station.

High Range Training Area was acquired by Defence in 1967 and has been used as a major army and RAAF training area. However, throughout these past 30 years, training activities have been restricted by the rugged terrain and by space limitations. These training activities include live firing, and armoured and formation manoeuvres. Further, the current intensity of training activities on High Range does not allow periodic resting of areas for regeneration in accordance with environmental management requirements.

In 1987 Defence investigated the possibility of extending High Range Training Area and purchased Dotswood station in 1988. An environmental impact statement was conducted during the period 1993-94 and an environmental management plan was developed in 1995 to protect heritage sites and contribute to sustainable land use. The environmental impact statement defined the 1990 user requirement in some detail. However, given the changes to force structure and training requirements since 1990, a range siting board was held in October 1995 to validate the intended use. The resulting modified user requirement is substantially consistent with the earlier one, by way of land usage, but differs in terms of operational concepts.

A further environmental assessment was commissioned in 1996 to determine the impact and significance of these modified activities. This assessment concluded that the proposed activities were 'not significant' in terms of the Environmental Protection (Impact of Proposals) Act, so long as the planned changes are implemented in accordance with the guidelines in the environmental management plan and in accordance with the recommendations in the consultancy report.

To ensure the entire training area is used efficiently and to meet EIS obligations, certain basic infrastructure is required for reasons of safety, training support and effective environmental management. The proposed works include: boundary fencing and warning signs; working accommodation for the range control organisation; communications facilities; roadworks; basic infrastructure for a 350-man camp; vehicle crossing points for creeks, roads and railways; and vehicle wash points. Subject to parliamentary approval, it is planned that a project manager be appointed in late 1996 with construction to commence in February 1997 and to be completed in June 1999. Construction costs are estimated at \$17.4 million at December 1996 prices and the out-turn cost is estimated at \$18.694 million.

CHAIR—Thank you, Brigadier McCann. We will now proceed to questions. The term 'high range training area' has a sort of Man from Snowy River ring about it, but what we saw yesterday was an environment that bore no resemblance to the southern part of Australia at all. In fact, it appeared to me to be a very fragile environment right now, desperately in need of resting rather than being run over by tanks. Would you like to

comment?

Brig. McCann—If I could just clarify the question, Mr Chairman, do you mean the existing high range training area or the new portion, the Dotswood portion?

CHAIR—I would like you to comment on both, though I would freely concede that the southern part of the Dotswood portion certainly appeared to be in a much more fragile state than the existing High Range Training Area. But I would not like to spend a week without provisions in the High Range Training Area either.

Brig. McCann—I would ask Mr Rolfe Hartley, our environmental consultant, to answer that question.

Mr Hartley—I think what you would have seen yesterday, as you said, is a country that is showing the effects of six years of drought. From the aerial inspection some of the wheel tracks of armoured personnel vehicles and things like that may have been evident. I think that is indicative perhaps of one of the things that is stated in the Defence evidence, and that is that the acquisition of Dotswood station to form Townsville field training area will have the advantage of being able to spread the pressure of training activities across a much larger area. That will help the overall management of the training area by enabling exercises to be rotated across various areas to enable areas to rest and recover with much less impact on the overall training effort than is the case with high range.

CHAIR—Can you present any evidence to the committee of areas currently occupied by army—I am talking about training areas occupied by army, not necessarily bases—for purposes such as it is imagined will be taking place on Dotswood? Are they better or worse for army's occupation, in the view of—

Mr Hartley—In my experience, they are generally better, the reason being that they are subject to a relatively low level of activity; they are fenced off; there is very little public access; and there is management effort to control feral animals. Perhaps the best case is the Shoalwater Bay training area north of Rockhampton. If you fly over that, you can distinctly see from the air the boundary of the training area, because although the training area up to 1965 was agricultural land used for grazing and forestry it has recovered since then, under the army's occupation and management, to the extent that it is now on the Register of the National Estate and very close to World Heritage status. You can clearly see the difference between the degraded agricultural land outside and the training area itself which is environmentally in very good condition.

CHAIR—I have not been to Shoalwater Bay. My colleague Mr Hollis may well have been and may be much more familiar with the environment there. But the other thing that struck me yesterday was that, given that the range is used for some firing activity, surely there is a fire hazard in the firing activity. What do we do to control fire on the

range in dry seasons?

Lt Col. Dawson—In the impact areas in particular there is a chance of fire. You would have noticed that the impact area on the current high range has less vegetation, principally because of fire, than the other northern areas of high range. Part of the reason for looking for increased impact areas is to try and spread the impact of high explosives and the consequent fires so that we can manage and rest those areas. The impact area on the high range is the result of 30 years of firing at that particular sector. That has had an effect on the environment in that area.

Brig. McCann—If I could just elaborate on that, Mr Chairman, an environmental management plan was produced as a result of the Dotswood EIS and there is a subplan in the environmental management plan which deals solely with a fire plan.

CHAIR—Thank you, Brigadier McCann. We will look to that in more detail. But one of the things that struck me yesterday—I did not ask about it and I should have—was that I did not see any evidence of what steps army takes to control a fire once one occurs. I appreciate that, given there was so little grass, it may not pose a hazard in October 1996. But I did wonder about what steps are taken to minimise the risk of fire spreading in a normal season, or following what we hope will be a return to normal seasons in this area.

Lt Col. Dawson—Currently in the high range areas we do burns of those areas which are along the border. That is to stop fires getting off our property and onto the neighbouring cattle properties, and also the reverse—to stop fires coming into our property. We would see that regime being extended into the other areas of TFTA once it was opened up, principally covering the major routes for fire on and off the property. We would need to develop a fire management regime for within the property. In the country there, fire is a natural part of the environment; in fact, some of the trees and other vegetation actually need fire to germinate as part of their natural cycle. So we will need to develop a detailed fire management plan internally—within the property—as well.

CHAIR—I had the impression yesterday that army is currently using Dotswood for some training activities. Could you elaborate, please?

Lt Col. Dawson—We are currently using Dotswood for infantry activities—that is, people moving on foot—and for small scale activities with wheeled vehicles. The principal increase in activity will be putting APCs, armoured vehicles and tanks, onto the Dotswood property proper and also in the scale of activity. While at the moment on Dotswood the scale of activity is fairly small, we are ultimately looking at going to unit and brigade level.

CHAIR—Thank you.

Brig. McCann—In the meantime, Mr Chairman, there is no live firing, because we

have an obligation under the EIS and under our own policy to fence live firing ranges.

CHAIR—Thank you, Brigadier McCann. That leads me to my next point. In the evidence given to us yesterday, it was obvious that the intention is to take the entire area—the existing high range and Dotswood—and sectorise it, for want of a better word, and restrict training to those sectors that are most suitable for either land vehicles or infantry, if it is camping, and that sort of isolated activity that Lieutenant Colonel Dawson referred to. You may like to comment to the committee about that sectorisation. But what struck me was that it meant that some sectors, particularly in the firing ranges, are going to be subject to very high impact.

I want to lead on to the question of what we are doing about ensuring, first, that public access is minimised and, second, that unexploded ordnance is recovered. If we get into the area of the various sectors and the impact as a consequence, the sectorising means that some sectors clearly will be advantaged because there will not be heavy army activity in them, but it must mean that others are disadvantaged because, from what we saw, we are going to have firing areas that I imagine will be made permanently inaccessible to the public.

Brig. McCann—Mr Chairman, I will ask Lieutenant Colonel Lans to first address the issue of the selection of the sectors, then Lieutenant Colonel Dawson will follow up with range management and control mechanisms.

Lt Col. Lans—Mr Chairman, there were sectors that were recommended in the EIS for use as impact sectors and the siting board chose those sectors to be used for impacts of high explosives ammunition. Those sectors will be fenced and signposted so as to prevent civilian movement onto those sectors. The actual target areas—that is, the relatively small areas that will be impacted by high explosives ammunition—will be monitored for damage and for unexploded projectiles, and they will periodically be rested and periodically cleared.

CHAIR—Is it expected that other services apart from the army will be using these firing ranges?

Lt Col. Lans—Yes it is. The air force have a bombing area in one of the new Dotswood impact sectors. They also have a bombing area in the current sector that is being used on the high range training area. Their actual area for bombing, their target area, is a fairly small area within the centre of the impact sector, so chosen that it is well away from the boundary and is safe in all respects of target designation, air approach and exit routes for the aircraft. So, again, there is minimum disturbance for neighbouring properties and minimal chance of any accident occurring in terms of the bomb dropping.

CHAIR—But if a bomb is dropped and it does not explode do you propose to send a team of infantrymen in to look for it or, perhaps with some measure of justice, to

invite the air force to undertake the same task?

Lt Col. Lans—The principle of management for UXO clearance is that the unit or organisation that is responsible for the UXO occurring in that area must clear it up. That will apply to the air force. Their area is relatively small, as I stated earlier, and in each practice the actual size of their particular area for targeting will be noted and will be known by range control. It is the responsibility of the user to declare unexploded bombs, if they are aware of it. They will then be asked to clear that particular bomb.

CHAIR—I am sorry to stay with this, Lieutenant Colonel Lans, but I have some sensitivity about this since, as Brigadier McCann is aware, I have the Port Wakefield proofing range in my own electorate. That has been a proofing range since prior to World War II. The services, and society generally, were not as particular about environmental issues in those days, so there is unexploded ordnance there and no-one knows where they are because there was no record.

You have indicated in your evidence that there will be some record kept. Given that there may be unexploded ordnance that cannot be exploded because of where they are—and I am just imagining that, giving the army the benefit of the doubt—are you confident that future generations will nonetheless know where that unexploded ordnance is because of your record-keeping system?

Lt Col. Lans—It is not possible to maintain a 100 per cent accurate record of every unexploded projectile that may occur on the range, due to the type of training activities that occur. On some occasions, there may be indirect and direct fire weapons firing from several locations at once which impact on a number of targets simultaneously in the target area. This may mean that anywhere between 50 and 100 projectiles land within a few minutes. Therefore, it is obviously not possible for those watching to know if all rounds exploded.

It is also not possible to predict if one or more of those rounds have ricocheted into other parts of the impact area where they may not have exploded and therefore become a UXO. Therefore, it is possible that in other parts of the impact area where the ricocheted traces are applied—in other words, where the round may ricochet to if it does not explode firstly on impact—unexploded projectiles will not be detected initially for some years, perhaps forever, if you consider the ruggedness of the terrain, the inaccessibility of it and the probability of searching and finding projectiles with the current techniques that are available.

Those techniques that are available today to find unexploded ordnances can really only be applied to relatively level and small areas of land where technology allows us to look down using magnetometers below the surface for the actual unexploded projectile. If the area is particularly large, this is not a practical method and it would simply be too time consuming. Therefore, it is not impossible that a round may end up not being

detected and would remain in the impact area as an unexploded projectile.

Brig. McCann—Mr Chairman, if I could just elaborate on that. The probability of such an occurrence is very low. First of all, we need to take into account the probability of a malfunction in the particular piece of ordnance or the fusing system itself. Then we need to consider the probability of that projectile ricocheting. For example, for artillery rounds, the chance of a ricochet is only 0.1 per cent, and for a direct fire weapon, such as a tank gun, the probability of a ricochet is one per cent.

So those two probabilities—that is, the probability of a malfunction and the probability of a ricochet—need to be considered to give you a circumstance where you might find it difficult to find a UXO which has ricocheted. What we are saying is that we have active management measures which will detect most UXOs, but we can never give a 100 per cent guarantee that there are not a couple of UXOs out there.

CHAIR—I also gathered, Brigadier McCann, and correct me if I am wrong, that Lieutenant Colonel Lans's evidence was that sector two—which is much of where the firing area is located—is largely inaccessible country or at least inaccessible on foot. Is that a fair summary?

Lt Col. Lans—No. The target areas will be reasonably accessible, in that the target areas themselves are designed to be relatively close to the edge of the impact areas where they will be engaged by troops conducting attack manoeuvres and various tactical exercises. As you saw yesterday when flying over High Range, the areas themselves, although rugged, are not inaccessible entirely.

However, what I inferred in my evidence was that the area behind the initial target areas towards the edge of the impact area—that is, the ricochet area where those rounds may then bounce into if they do not go off—is extremely rugged and very large. In most impact areas, you are looking at areas some five by 10 kilometres of very rugged terrain. It is that area which is not frequently engaged but is in the ricochet trace areas where, if a round ricochets, it will be extremely difficult to find.

CHAIR—Other members may want to ask questions about that particular facility. We have just dealt with what is going to be an environmentally sensitive issue. The committee has before it in submissions very little from environmentalists critical about what the army is proposing. I have no doubt that the environmental movement is as responsibly active in Townsville as it is in any other part of Australia. How would you account for its relative acceptance of what I would have thought was environmentally unacceptable?

Brig. McCann—We have certainly consulted with the relevant environmental organisations. We have been through a full environmental impact assessment process ordered under the Environmental Protection (Impact of Proposals) Act. We have gone

through a statutory process where draft EISs have been circulated to all the relevant environmental organisations, and they have had the opportunity to comment. That occurred over quite a few years. Following that, we prepared environmental management plans. We also undertook extra environmental assessments recently. I think the extent of the environmental assessments we have done to date would have given the environmental community some confidence. We have spent \$1.3 million on environmental assessments, and I think that is quite a large investment to make to demonstrate our environmental management practices.

I think the issue that may be worrying you is one of the impact areas. Within the impact area, the target area has been selected in such a way that UXOs impacting into the target area would be relatively easy to locate if they became UXOs. The more difficult issue is that of ricochets, but the probability of a ricochet occurring concurrently with a malfunction is quite low.

CHAIR—I was more worried about the way that you had successfully wooed—and, if one was being uncharitable, one might almost say seduced—the environmental movement in north Queensland. You might like to comment on the relationship you have with the environmental movement and what is currently being done to reassure them of ongoing environmental management of both the existing high range and Dotswood station.

Brig. McCann—We have a very good record with the environmental movement, particularly in north Queensland and in Queensland generally. The committee heard earlier the comments regarding Shoalwater Bay. We have a very good record with the 10 Terminal Regiment proposal, which your committee looked at last year. We went to almost extraordinary lengths to meet environmental concerns. I think we have a good record because of that. We have established an environmental management advisory committee, which involves all sorts of organisations and individuals with an interest in the Townsville field training area. All those factors have combined to satisfy the environmental organisations.

Lt Col. Dawson—From the local perspective, the environmental groups here are far from quiescent. We have put a lot of work into developing our links with the local environmental people and the local government and state government organisations. We have other training areas in North Queensland, some of which are wholly within the wet tropics World Heritage areas, so we have some experience in managing training areas in sensitive areas. The northern part of TFTA is in the wet tropics area as well. I think the real key to success is an ongoing consultation, an exchange of information and the ability for Defence to follow through on its commitments in terms of research to be undertaken and the management programs to be put in place.

Mr HOLLIS—I have heard about your good relationship with the environmental movement. What about your relationship with the neighbours? Have any concerns been raised by neighbours to the property?

Lt Col. Dawson—We have a number of properties around TFTA. We have a close working relationship with them, and we attempt to get them in on a fairly regular basis to brief them on developments. Our last briefing was on 30 August, where we covered the current proposals for the development of the range. We deal with them on a day-to-day basis in such things as fire management and also the management of stock. Some of the areas of the current High Range area are unfenced, and we need to make sure that their stock is not out on our property. There are always some friction points as neighbours, but I think on the whole we have a good working relationship with our neighbours.

Mr HOLLIS—What are those friction points?

Lt Col. Dawson—High Range has been in existence for 30 years. There have been some examples in the past where fires from both sides have gone onto our property and onto their property, and that probably provided the background for our current fire management regime in terms of burning in fire breaks. Stock straying can be a problem, and it is a matter of us identifying to the owners where their stock is and asking them to remove them.

Mr HOLLIS—I, like the chairman, was quite surprised that there were no environmental submissions on this. I thought that the land was quite fragile out there. If you start putting tanks across there, I thought there would be a great danger of erosion in parts. Bearing in mind what you have said about Shoalwater Bay and what good condition that is in, the environmentalists at some time have expressed disquiet at the presence of the army there. Are you not worried that your record will become so good with these degraded stations and that, as a result of such a good management program, in a few years time there will be quite a push to have you out of this land?

Brig. McCann—Mr Hollis, I would never be concerned about my record getting too good. In fact, I would be quite pleased with that. You made the comment that you were surprised that there was a lack of environmental comment. I think we need to appreciate that Defence acquired the Dotswood property in 1988 and it is not as if we rushed out there and started to put in infrastructure. We have been chipping away, since October 1988, with a consultative and an environmental assessment program. The department raised its own notice of intention which, in itself, was a substantive document. The Environmental Protection Agency directed a full environmental assessment and that was undertaken by Dames and Moore. As part of that environmental assessment process, the draft EIS was circulated and made available for public comment and various environmental organisations would have commented. So there has been that EIS process where people have been consulted.

In addition to that, the environmental management advisory committee for the TFTA, which we have spoken about, includes a lot of environmental organisations. In our own consultation leading up to the presentation of this proposal to you we have consulted fairly widely. So there have been comments but the process has been a lengthy one dating

back to 1988-89.

In respect of the army transmogrifying degraded grazing properties to pristine wilderness areas and therefore inviting takeover bids from envious graziers, we have not had evidence of that happening yet. With Shoalwater Bay, we have not got anyone bidding for it, in a pastoral sense anyway. Other people have interests in Shoalwater Bay.

Puckapunyal is another, and probably a better example. The committee visited there last year and you would have recognised that parts of Puckapunyal were looking excellent. That has not always been the case. Back in the 1960s, Puckapunyal was a severely degraded property and now it would equal any grazing property in central Victoria. Having created that situation again, there has been no pressure from anyone to acquire Puckapunyal for grazing or farming purposes.

Mr HATTON—Just on the same line, environmental processes are ongoing and there are a number of training areas in the north. Has the army taken any steps internally to have someone overview this range, and others, from an environmental perspective? That is, do you have a specialist who has an ongoing responsibility for monitoring the use of the range over time and for assisting with environmental management?

Brig. McCann—At the local level, each major army installation now has an environmental officer. That is a relatively recent initiative. We would probably have about 15 environmental officers stationed around the country. Mr Alan Barton, who you met last night and who is in the audience today, is the environmental officer for north Queensland. We have another environmental officer who looks after south Queensland. We have a well-developed infrastructure at the local level. Centrally, the department has its own directorate of environment and heritage, and through the Facilities organisation there is a fairly close link with making sure that various environmental and heritage policies are implemented.

There are also ongoing reviews on the nature, the size and the disposition of the army's present holding of training areas. The Australian National Audit Office undertook a review recently. In fact, that review noted over-usage at High Range. In addition to that review, the army is presently reviewing training areas Australia-wide. One of the reasons for that is that there is a drift to the north with our combat units redeploying—particularly from the mechanised brigade, the 1st Brigade—to Darwin. As a consequence of that move we have acquired some large training areas in the Northern Territory; in fact, many times larger than the Townsville field training area. So over the next 12 months the army will be undertaking a review of its total training area requirement.

CHAIR—I am trying to move off the environment, if other committee members are happy, because fundamentally the committee is here because of the money that is going to be expended in making the training area into a more effective training area in a number of little ways. One of the largest areas of expenditure is in fencing. Is the cost of

fencing being shared with neighbours or borne entirely by Army?

Brig. McCann—At this stage, Mr Chairman, Army is meeting the cost of the fencing. One of the reasons for that is that our own internal Defence policies require any of our training areas where live firing of large calibre munitions take place to be appropriately signposted and fenced. If on some exercises we train on non-Commonwealth owned land, then there are severe restrictions placed on what sort of live firing can take place. In fact the department will only agree to the use of small arms on non-Commonwealth property. So it is really a duty of care obligation. The signposting is really warning signs. That is only one part of the duty of care management regime. As well as fencing and signposting, advertisements are placed in the local press warning people of the dangers and notifying of the various activities on the range.

CHAIR—Brigadier McCann, installing fencing on a one-way basis is a fairly neighbourly gesture, as anyone would agree. Is the department prepared to be even more neighbourly and see whether local farmers who may have an interest in assisting with the fencing as part of a job creation scheme, particularly given the drought that farmers are experiencing, would have an opportunity to tender either individually or as a group for this sort of fencing work since I notice it makes up a large part of the total expenditure?

Brig. McCann—The fencing works would be tendered competitively. We have not at this stage considered any joint venture type of arrangement with adjoining landowners.

CHAIR—There would be nothing to stop adjoining landowners forming their own little temporary cooperative to tender alongside anyone else who may be interested?

Brig. McCann—The issue of fencing is one which we will investigate further, Mr Chairman. I might add that the pressures, really, for fencing are probably more on our side, particularly where we adjoin areas like the wet tropics area where it is not a grazing owner but is crown land. Obviously we are going to have difficulties convincing someone else to share costs of the fences on those boundaries.

CHAIR—My question was rather built on the fact that there may well be job opportunities for local farmers who are seeking income in the face of the drought in a skill that they would have to match anyone else. That was really the thrust of the question.

Brig. McCann—We would be sympathetic to the plight of any farmers. Defence policy would still need to apply; that is, that the work would have to be bid for on a competitive basis and any contract would be awarded based on value for money considerations.

CHAIR—I understand. Yesterday at the hearing I indicated that I was more of a pliers and wire man than an engineer, but I think I will stick with politics rather than fencing, if you don't mind. Brigadier McCann, the other question I wanted to ask—if there

is nothing else people want to ask from a neighbourly point of view—was about access to the range by other forces. I don't mean Australian defence forces, I mean other forces who may want to be involved in joint training exercises. Do you envisage this happening—overseas visiting forces?

Lt Col. Dawson—Yes. Currently the High Range area has been used in the recent past by some small American forces from the Pacific, both army and air force. It is ultimately a matter of government policy as to what foreign forces would be allowed to use the range, but I would envisage that it would be attractive to foreign forces to utilise the training areas that will be available. Also, military operations in the urban terrain facility which we flew over yesterday, which is being constructed, will probably be unique within Australia and the region. I imagine that will be fairly attractive to foreign forces as well.

Mr HOLLIS—On a related matter, this field training area, how many other such areas do we have in the army? You actually said that this was unique, but Brigadier McCann has mentioned Puckapunyal and there is Shoalwater Bay—

Lt Col. Dawson—What I was referring to as unique, Mr Hollis, was the military operations in urban terrain facility which is currently being constructed—the small mock village. There is nothing else like that which provides the same requirements within Australia.

Mr HOLLIS—Sure.

Lt Col. Dawson—There are certainly other training areas, large areas of land.

Mr HOLLIS—What are the other large training areas that we have got?

Brig. McCann—I have a list of those which I can table or I can read out. I know most of them by their first names but, to give you an indication, the army controls 2,338,076 hectares of training areas throughout the country—up to about 2.3 million hectares—and the contribution which TFTA makes to that is 230,000 hectares. So we are talking about TFTA comprising about a tenth of the army's total training area stock.

The only large training areas, let us call them training areas suitable for formation manoeuvre, are reasonably limited. There is Shoalwater Bay and the Bradshaw property in the Northern Territory between the Fitzmaurice and Victoria Rivers which we have just acquired. So Shoalwater Bay, Townsville and Bradshaw are the major training areas. We have smaller training areas such as Puckapunyal. To give the committee a feel there, Puckapunyal, with the adjacent Graytown proof establishment, is about 50,000 hectares. We can certainly make available to the committee a full listing of the location and size of all the training areas. But in a macro sense we only have the three major formation size manoeuvre areas with Bradshaw yet to be developed and that is a proposal which we will

bring to your committee in March or April next year.

I have neglected to mention another large training area and that is Yampi in north-western Australia. At this stage that is not a training area which we have used on a regular basis, although there is some foreign force interest in it. That particular training area is about 566,000 hectares compared to the Bradshaw property which is 880,000 hectares. So they are both considerably larger than this training area here at approximately 230,000 hectares. The army is of course reviewing the future of all its training areas because of the relocation of many of its combat units from the south to the north.

Mr HOLLIS—As for the work that is to be done there over the next couple of years, why do not you use army engineers for some of that work? It seems to me that recently at Scherger the engineer has been used there. From my reports, not only has it been very successful, but has been very cost competitive. We did hear the other day off the record that there was a considerable cost saving, or was it on the record? In fact, it was a record saving and the RAAF are boasting how cheaply they can do those projects in comparison to the army, especially using the Scherger example. It seems to me that, if the RAAF used army engineers to do the work there, surely you would be able to utilise your own forces and have something of a cost reduction.

Brig. McCann—In relation to the claims of coming in well under budget, I am not sure whether you were speaking to a reliable witness, but I am sure you were. There is no doubt that the use of army engineers can achieve some economies. We will certainly consider the use of army engineers on some of the elements of the work here. The Scherger example was slightly different in that there was a substantial amount of work which required the deployment of army construction units for a number of years.

Certainly the magnitude of the work proposed here at Townsville would nowhere near equal the civil earthworks undertaken by the army at Scherger. But the potential exists, and being sensitive to the interests of the local civil construction industry, we would consider the use of army engineers to undertake some of the work. Because it is difficult to guarantee their availability—and this is because in a contingent situation army construction engineers could be taken away from a job site—in determining what work they might undertake we would look at some lower priority elements on the scope of works and consider those for army engineers. In fact, we will be undertaking that action in the next few months.

CHAIR—I would just like to return briefly to the question of neighbourhoods that I had overlooked. You have made a comment about your relations with neighbours and with environmentalists in this area. Clearly the other question I should have been pursuing was the whole question of Aboriginal heritage and Aboriginal occupation of the area, given that almost a quarter of a million hectares is involved. Could you comment on any Aboriginal issues that may pose a problem to the development that the army envisages?

Brig. McCann—To answer the question I would ask Mr Rolfe Hartley to discuss those environmental issues in general terms and following that Lieutenant Colonel Dawson could describe some of the more detailed consultative arrangements with Aboriginal communities.

Mr Hartley—The original environmental impact statement process that was undertaken in the early 1990s identified archaeological and cultural site protection as a key issue and that was identified by the environment minister in her recommendations at the conclusion of the EIS process. Since then—and Lieutenant Colonel Dawson can expand on this—identifying and inventorying the cultural assets of the high range training area and TFTA has been a major exercise undertaken by the environmental officer.

A considerable amount of work has been done to inventory the Aboriginal archaeological and cultural sites and I think there are about 80 individual artefact sites that have been identified on TFTA. Lieutenant Colonel Dawson might like to expand on what is currently being done with that study.

Lt Col. Dawson—We have established contact with a group known as the Kudjala Land Trust, who are representative of the people who took over that area which is currently in the TFTA. This group is centred at Charters Towers and we have had a number of meetings with the group and have, in fact, invited them out to Dotswood Station to have a meeting on the site out there.

We currently have an Aboriginal archaeological survey being conducted and the Kudjala group have provided some assistance in terms of personnel to assist that survey and provide advice. Also we will be consulting with them on the management of what sites we may find and how they will be protected as part of the ongoing management of the range. Involved in each consultation process as well has been the Office of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, their local representative here in Townsville and also the Queensland Department of Environment and their archaeological department.

I see this process as very much an ongoing one. The more we study the property, the more we are finding some Aboriginal sites and I think we will be able to develop a working arrangement with the group that is interested and has linkages with this area which will be mutually beneficial to both sides.

CHAIR—That is very encouraging. Any other questions from other committee members about the natural heritage issues? If not, can I turn to some of the infrastructure that is involved in this exercise. The largest of the confidential cost estimates before the committee covers roads, crossing points, bridges and what have you. Brigadier McCann frequently makes the point to this committee that the army really is about being a service on the move—that where air force relies on an air strip, army relies on being mobile. The very nature of what we have seen of army equipment means that there are heavy trucks carrying heavy loads over unformed roads. Some of the roads through Dotswood station

are clearly roads used by other Queenslanders, so could someone comment on the impact you will be making on what are access roads for other Queenslanders running both east-west or north-south through the station.

Brig. McCann—In response to the initial part of your question about the army living and fighting in the field, yes, that is true.

CHAIR—I have been well briefed.

Brig. McCann—But when we are talking about peacetime operations in a training area, we are obliged to comply with environmental requirements, particularly those under the Environment Protection (Impact of Proposals) Act. Some of the infrastructure being provided is not really to allow the army to train. It is there for management purposes, safety reasons, as well as facilitating the administration of training. So, I think there needs to be a recognition that the infrastructure there is not there in its entirety for the conduct of training. It is really there to allow training to be conducted in a safe and environmentally responsible way.

CHAIR—Yes. I should have made it clearer, Brigadier McCann. We flew, for example, over the Hervey Range Developmental Road and it would strike me that, given the very nature of moving army equipment through the training area, the road would be carrying heavier loads than it would otherwise be expected to carry. It is a road not exclusively there for Dotswood Station, but for the use of other Queenslanders. That is what prompted my observation about the money being allocated to road redevelopment within the training area.

Brig. McCann—The 1993-94 environmental impact assessment considered the issue of army traffic on public roads and an assessment was made that about 10 per cent of the traffic on the Hervey Range Developmental Road would in fact be military vehicles. We recognise even now, before we start developing the Townsville field training area, that we should make a contribution to the local authorities for that and we pay an ex gratia payment in lieu of rates to the Dalrymple Shire Council for road maintenance of the public roads which run through the Townsville field training area.

CHAIR—I would suggest to you, though, that the 10 per cent is an irrelevant figure because I could run up and down there on my Honda 90 on an all-day, every day basis and make no impact on the road at all, but if I crossed it with one of your multi-wheelers loaded with a D9, or whatever the equivalent is in tank terms, I would make an awful mess in only 0.1 of a per cent of the usage.

Brig. McCann—Yes, Mr Chairman, but a major part of this proposal, and that is indicated in the confidential cost plan, is the construction of crossing sites. Those crossing sites would be across the Hervey Range Developmental Road and as well across creeks and rivers. They are specifically provided to protect the road from military traffic.

CHAIR—Is there any north-south public access running through Dotswood Station?

Lt Col. Dawson—No, there is not, apart from the Mingela Road which comes off the Hervey Range Road and runs south to Dotswood Station and then from there off towards Mingela, which is towards Charters Towers. But north of the Hervey Range Road, there is no public access through the range area.

CHAIR—So the work proposed to be done to what is the Star Homestead, from memory, is in fact for army access rather than public access?

Lt Col. Dawson—It will be internal range road.

Mr HATTON—We do not live in the best of all possible worlds, and I suppose this is not the best of all possible training areas for you. You have just extended the size of it but there are a number of obvious obstacles in terms of using it to its fullest. I note here in one of the options that you put aside that the total cost of the project if that option had been taken up would have been \$39 million, where you would have replaced that Hervey Range Developmental Road and also undertaken to move the electricity lines in order to open that range up. How successful do you think the use of the range is going to be given that you have those constraints in the range and that you have decided not to move that far at this stage?

Brig. McCann—We certainly considered the option of relocating the Kidston power line and the Mingela Road but not the development road. The reason for that was to allow unhindered manoeuvre. We need to make a trade-off between the perfect world and we need to look at the restrictions we can place on training which, while onerous, can actually be imposed but with some detriment to training value. It is like everything else in life. It is a trade-off, and we have assessed at this time that we would not be comfortable that the training benefits would justify the substantial increased capital investment.

What we would also wish to do is get some experience with actual training on the area, so in a way it is a fairly cautious conservative approach where we put in the minimum infrastructure and then, after a period of operating experience, we will reassess the situation and see if, in fact, any other changes are needed. It might be that the in-built constraints that are in place because of the public road and the power line are such that we can manage quite easily and therefore we would not consider further work. There might be other changes we might propose after a period of operating experience.

The committee need not be concerned that we might come back and ask a very generous government for more money because the sort of work I am talking about would be fine tuning, marginal work and in many cases this is where we would use our army engineers. They are available as a ready resource to undertake those adjustments to the infrastructure which we provide here to meet evolving requirements.

Mr HATTON—I appreciate the conservative approach, but there is an order of magnitude of \$22 million between the option that you are putting up and the one where you were looking at moving the road and power lines. So it is a case of your keeping that under continuing review. I hope that you can do it conservatively.

Brig. McCann—We certainly will, and my judgment was that additional investment just could not be justified. I am not going to say that it might never be justified. What I am saying is that I want to see further practical operating experience before I would develop a proposal seeking departmental and government approval to that sort of expenditure. At this stage I do not believe it is justified.

Mr HATTON—There would be some general concern in terms of the powerline to the north, in particular, given that the area—I think that it is Area 2—would be used as a range and you would be firing a lot of munitions into that area. What precautions have you got in regard to the protection of those powerlines, both the north-south and the east-west? Could you explain practically how your manoeuvres and the firing will impinge on those and how targeted you will be?

Lt Col. Lans—The EIS made recommendations for the use of that particular sector as an impact sector and it included in that area the powerline easement. When the siting board sat, we reduced the size of the impact area that was recommended to exclude an area outside, if you like, that power easement. If you can envisage the map yesterday, the two power easements—the one running to the north and the one running to the west—make the boundaries in those two areas of the impact area.

With reference to the impact area, the rules by which we operate are such that for any boundary, rounds are not to be directed to fall within the certain safe distances from those boundaries. Those distances vary according to the splinter distance of the ammunition that is being used. On top of that, there is a restriction in terms of distances with a margin for safety, so that no rounds will be directed to fall anywhere within a reasonable distance so that splinters or ammunition can hit those powerlines.

In terms of the easement on the southern side of that particular impact area, indirect fire weapons may fire over the top of those powerlines and there is no safety restriction that will prevent that from occurring, and there is no reason why that should be so. There are a number of safety practices in place on the gun position when firing occurs. Each round is checked by an independent officer who checks all the guns that are firing to ensure that the correct settings are set on the equipment that have been ordered by the command post, and there are checks in place from a safety team which sits in the command post which checks to see that all the computations are correct. So there are independent checks made of every round that is fired on a training area.

There are independent checks, plus the safety restrictions which prevent us from firing out towards, or near, such restrictions as powerlines or, indeed, any other restrictions

that are contained within the impact area—and there sometimes are restrictions if, for example, a heritage site were contained within an impact area. We would not be allowed to target those and there would be safety restrictions around them. Those restrictions together, plus the safety factors, would prevent us from damaging such a facility.

Mr HATTON—In regard to the air corridor, there is a management plan that has been progressed. What stage has that reached and what difficulties are envisaged in terms of using the range with light aircraft being able to fly through the middle of it?

Lt Col. Lans—The air corridor is a permanent corridor which has traditionally been used, to begin with, by all the local landowners. It conveniently follows the railway line and the Hervey Range Developmental Road forming a left and right, if you like, or a north and south boundary, and it is easily recognisable on the ground. To add to that, sector six which lies below that corridor was found to be environmentally very sensitive. Therefore, it was convenient for the siting board to determine that that area should be not used for any live firing activities and, by establishing a corridor above it which was permanently opened, there was also to be no fire across the top of it—in other words, from the north to the south, or vice versa.

This effectively cuts the training area in half for us. We have accepted that and we have designed our concept of operations to accommodate that factor. That is one of the factors that drove the concept of operations to have manoeuvre corridors which run east-west, and it led to the decision that the north-south one would be one which has controlled access through that particular sector which lies underneath the air corridor. The movement of manoeuvre vehicles through that particular corridor will be restricted for at least the time being to a road. There will be no live firing and they will emerge at the other end of that road and fan out again. Perhaps after a period of time it may be possible to use a slightly wider corridor there of a kilometre or two, depending on the environmental assessment of the sensitivity of the soils in that area. But there is no problem, we believe, in the management of that air corridor as it is already a well established local corridor and we will enhance it by the establishment of lights at each end to assist the aircraft in finding the entrance to the corridor and the exit to the corridor.

Mr HATTON—So the Army has adjusted to the constraints that have been imposed on the use of that—

Lt. Col. Lans—The army would prefer it not to be there but we have adjusted our concept of operations.

CHAIR—There will be no overflying of other parts of the range. If I am a Cessna 150 pilot out of Townsville—

Lt. Col. Lans—The other parts of the range have recently been considered by the airspace coordination committee in Canberra and the airspace plan for the rest of the range

consists of two blocks of airspace: one over the northern areas, that is the Star area; and one over the southern part, the Dotswood part.

The agreement that we have reached is that either one of those blocks of airspace can be closed by Defence putting in a notice to the appropriate authorities. However, we have agreed to the condition that both airspaces will not be closed simultaneously. This is because civil aviation authorities had an objection to the fact that aircraft leaving Townsville and travelling to the west, small aircraft but commercial operators, if they had to circumvent the entire area would spend extra time in the air and it would cost them considerable amounts of money. Therefore, we agreed to the fact that we would either close the north or the south. So they will be routed by air traffic control to go either north or south and they have agreed to that. Never will both areas be closed.

If there is no live firing then there will be no restriction and they can fly wherever they wish. Live firing applies to various types of ammunition—they have various ceiling heights. But the various ceiling heights will be notified to air traffic control who will then route the aircraft appropriately.

Brig. McCann—There is a very well established process in place where Defence has the power under legislation to declare restricted areas, and this applies in your own electorate for Port Wakefield, and with a system of restricted areas in place, again the system of notifying airmen and mariners applies, that is, the NOTAM system. In this particular case it is used widely throughout Australia.

CHAIR—There have been some details sought by committee members about the confidential cost estimates that I do not think are appropriate to put on the record. Therefore, I propose to adjourn the hearing and call a morning tea break of 15 minutes and these matters can be sorted out. I will then reconvene the hearing.

Short adjournment

CHAIR—We will reconvene, wherein I invite Mr Hatton to ask questions.

Mr HATTON—Brigadier McCann, in the background papers, one option that was considered was to have no further development of the high range area and to continue to use Shoalwater Bay for main training in this part of Queensland. What are the differences between Shoalwater Bay and this facility for training? What drove you to seeing the necessity for developing this range in conjunction with Shoalwater?

Brig. McCann—The first issue is who might use the Townsville field training area. The 3rd Brigade is located in Townsville. They will be one of the major users. They will not be the only user, but they will certainly be a major user. It is a couple of days in travelling time from Townsville to Shoalwater Bay, so there is a rather large time and cost penalty associated with just deploying from Townsville to Shoalwater Bay. While

Shoalwater Bay is a reasonably large training area, it does have some environmental limitations on its use. It is on the register of the National Estate, which means that we need to be very careful about what we do there. Some of the impact areas are relatively inaccessible. Various sectors need to be rested and rotated as we would do so here at Townsville. So you have limitations and cost penalties associated with the two days of deployment.

There are other pressures on Shoalwater Bay, particularly for combined force usage. Shoalwater Bay is the only amphibious training location on the east coast of Australia. The US Marines, in particular, are interested in Shoalwater Bay. There will be a large exercise next year—Exercise Tandem Thrust—involving about 18,000 US Navy and US Marines. Shoalwater Bay is also used rather extensively by the Singaporean armed forces, who rotate a light mechanised brigade through Shoalwater Bay. So there are quite a few competing interests for Shoalwater Bay. The present usage is very high to the extent that we are pushing environmental sustainability to the limit. That is one of the main reasons why we would prefer that the 3rd Brigade trained here. There is extreme pressure on army operating costs. The costs associated with deploying the whole of 3rd Brigade from Townsville to Shoalwater Bay are fairly expensive.

Mr HATTON—So there would be significant cost savings by taking into account the location factors here in Townsville?

Brig. McCann—There will be significant cost savings associated with 3rd Brigade. But the nature of the training areas is slightly different, with Shoalwater Bay providing opportunities for amphibious and maritime training as well. So a slightly different type of training would be undertaken. In a sense, both areas are suitable for formation level fire and manoeuvre. By formation level, we mean a brigade.

Mr HATTON—Is the nature of the country at Shoalwater very different from the country here? Therefore, does it give you a broader range of training?

Brig. McCann—There are differences. I ask Mr Hartley to comment on the environmental differences of the two training areas.

Mr Hartley—There are substantial differences between the two training areas. The Townsville field training area, apart from the rainforest area in the north in and around sector four, is primarily tropical savanna country. It is much more open and suitable for armoured vehicle manoeuvres than Shoalwater Bay, where the terrain is, in many areas, rougher and the country is a lot closer in vegetation. Many of the areas of Shoalwater Bay are quite inaccessible and do not lend themselves to use for activities such as armoured vehicle manoeuvres.

CHAIR—I understand as part of the land purchase that the state government would not allow Defence to acquire mineral rights to Dotswood. There are currently

numerous exploration permits for minerals and approved mining leases throughout the area. Defence and the state government have agreed upon a set of permit approval conditions for both existing mining leases and applications. Could someone describe for me the permit approval approach.

Brig. McCann—Certainly, Mr Chairman. First, let us look at the Commonwealth's policy on facilitating access for mineral exploration and mining to Commonwealth land. The Commonwealth will only consider such aspects if it is not going to impact upon our use of that land. The Commonwealth would wish to ensure that environmental and heritage issues are not adversely impacted upon. Within that multiple land use policy, applications for mining permits and mineral exploration leases are controlled through the mining warden with the Queensland government.

We have an agreement with the Commonwealth and state Department of Mines and Energy that Dotswood is, in fact, a special area and that there will be some restrictions because of military use. All new mining tenures are subject to the agreement of Defence. Mining lease applications contain an environmental management operational statement which must address environmental issues. The plan must be approved by the mining warden and, in the case of Dotswood, agreed to by Defence. An exploration permit for minerals allows the holder to carry out mineral exploration generally for a period of one to a maximum of five years. There are a number of other administrative arrangements, which I will not go into. On the other hand, a mining lease application can vary in currency according to the program proposed and the mineral to be mined, and it can be for up to a maximum period of 21 years.

There are currently eight exploration permits for minerals and 14 current mining lease applications within the Dotswood boundary. These various mining leases expire over the period up to the year 2008. The number of exploration permits—originally 14 at the time of acquisition—has decreased to eight. At this stage, none of the mining leases are actually being worked.

Of the eight exploration permits, only three have actually been taken up and activated. We believe that, with cooperation and continued consultation between the Queensland state government and Defence, where there is the opportunity for both parties to attempt to compromise on access, we can entertain a limited amount of activity.

CHAIR—So if a major or minor ore body were discovered, it would then be a matter of negotiation rather than having a fixed policy at this stage?

Brig. McCann—At this stage, we have an agreement with the state government that we would be involved in the process of considering any application. That agreement with the state government requires Defence to agree before the mining warden can approve any permit or lease.

Mr HATTON—I would like to take up the issue of unexploded ordnance. Could Lieutenant Colonel Lans outline what significant changes there have been in technology in the last 10 years to identify and deal with unexploded ordnance.

Lt Col. Lans—The technology in this area is improving. There are now magnetometers available that will read the electromagnetic level of metals down to variable depths of up to three metres. If an area is known or suspected to be UXO contaminated, a 100 per cent magnetometer search, after a visual surface search, will indicate whatever metals may be below the surface of the ground.

This is a lengthy and time consuming process, because every reading has to be, firstly, interpreted and, secondly, investigated. You dig down and investigate the metal. If it is a UXO, it will be removed and destroyed. Quite frequently, it turns out to be not a UXO because the magnetometer does not differentiate.

There are a number of other processes being investigated that we do not have details about as yet. They are in the experimental stage. We have not used them in Australian conditions. UXO removal is being expanded by a number of private companies as well as by defence organisations, such as ADI. It still cannot be 100 per cent guaranteed, however, that UXOs will be found and removed, despite improvements in technology.

Mr HATTON—So this is not a quick, easy or cheap process?

Lt Col. Lans—UXO removal is not a quick and easy process. It can take many months in small areas. A 100 per cent search for eight to 10 hectares might take a year or more, depending on how many resources you put to that task. If you were to put a lot of resources on it, it might take less, but that would obviously be considerably more expensive. It is manpower intensive for the digging et cetera. The visual search is a slow and systematic process of going over every inch of the ground.

Mr HATTON—I am taking the opportunity to ask you these questions because of my interest in the proposal to build a second airport in Sydney at Holsworthy, and that has recently been included on the EIS. Some of the people who proposed it indicated that from the last 10 years of development it was now a relatively quick and easy process, and you have indicated that that is not the case. In relation to Holsworthy—given its long history as a military firing range with a large range of ordnance being used—what would the difficulties be there, given the extent of the range and the amount of time that it has been used?

Brig. McCann—This is a politically sensitive issue and one that is not directly related to the proposal before the committee. I would respond only to the detail that the Department of Defence is contributing to various studies looking at options associated with a second Sydney airport, and the impact that a Holsworthy location might have on

army facilities in Holsworthy. But I would prefer not to discuss in any detail any of the issues associated with the second Sydney airport at Holsworthy.

CHAIR—I accept that. I permitted Mr Hatton's question because I thought there may have been a simple answer. I do not believe Mr Hatton's question was politically motivated, and I do not think you were suggesting that, so I was not unhappy about him asking the question if there had been a simple answer. But, given the complication of clearing areas—and we have had some experience with this ourselves with other sites—if there is no simple answer then I am happy for the question to stand unanswered and for Mr Hatton to raise it privately with anyone he wishes to over lunch.

Mr HATTON—Could I put it in a different way then and make it not location specific. In relation to this range, you have indicated that because it is new, the history is relatively well known, and you would be using recent munitions, that in terms of direct impact areas you are able to identify fairly well—but you cannot guarantee—that all of that unexploded ordnance would be taken away. But you also indicated in previous evidence that the ricochet areas were of some concern.

With modern artillery being used—with the improvement in fuses and so on—it is indicated that it is fairly simple. But with much older ordnances and with a much larger area being involved, is there a great difference in terms of the problem with unexploded ordnance?

CHAIR—Can I just interrupt here. We have not got any much older ones on this site, have we? We have only got the new ones.

Mr HATTON—No, I am asking in general.

Brig. McCann—Again, I can only generalise. We discussed earlier that the question of UXOs is more an issue when we are faced with the problem of ricochets. The selection of target areas has been made in such a way that it will be easier to identify a UXO which impacts on a target area. With the reliability of newer munitions, the probability of a malfunction in the ordnance will be reduced, so the situation will improve.

Also, our procedures at the moment require a detailed reporting of UXOs. Contamination in the past occurred in times of national emergency, and I think when we had people knocking on the back door at Darwin there were not too many people worrying about where UXOs were falling and carefully recording their location for subsequent destruction. There is a whole new management regime now, which will certainly reduce the impact, and we are never likely to see the levels of contamination created in earlier days. First of all, you have a management regime; you have more reliable munitions themselves. We have deliberately gone about selecting target areas where it will be easier to identify and locate a UXO if we do get one.

On the issue of ricochets, it might be difficult to locate ricochets; but, again, in our earlier evidence we gave the probability of ricochets for various types of weapons and, in fact, for artillery weapons it is quite low. For tank weapons—direct fire weapons—there is a one per cent probability of a ricochet. Again, that has got to be matched to the probability of a malfunction; and the overall probability of a malfunction combined with a ricochet is pretty low. The greater probability is with direct fire weapons. Some direct fire weapons do not have an explosive charge; they rely on kinetic energy—sheer force itself—for the damage effect they cause: for example, the armour piercing, discarding sabot rounds fired by tanks. Some direct fire weapons, where the potential is greater, do not in fact have an explosive charge in them.

In terms of other ways of locating them, we have heard that there have been a few advances in recent years with metal detection, but it is still a difficult area. To give another example of how we actually track our ordnance, in the chairman's own electorate, at Port Wakefield, we have a proof establishment where we fire ammunition out over the sea in the tidal flats and we then recover those rounds for examination after they have been fired. In some cases, we use radar to track the projectile to its landing place. The use of radar in a field training situation would be difficult. At Port Wakefield, it is a very deliberate process of firing out over tidal flats, and it is not one that could be replicated if you were going to go about training in a serious manner.

In training, with the firing of single rounds such as artillery, it is certainly easier to identify and locate an unexploded round. But, in realistic training, where you get a whole regiment of guns that fire what we call 'fire for effect', you are obviously getting hundreds of rounds hitting the ground in the space of a couple of minutes, and it gets very much harder to count and identify explosions. I know that has not answered the question simply, but it gives a summary of some of the difficulties and some of the possibilities. I would say the greatest advance has been one, in fact, of range management.

CHAIR—I believe that has answered it adequately. As I said, Brigadier McCann, if you indicated that, in flat areas such as Port Wakefield—or, for that matter, the alternative Holsworthy site—it was easier because of the flat terrain to find these ordnances, then I was happy to allow the Holsworthy section to float in. I think you have indicated that it is difficult, no matter where you are, to locate unexploded ordnances that have been around for some time. The location of unexploded ordnances fired on a flat area in 1996 may be more easily determined, because there is no ricochet effect.

Mr HATTON—As you indicated earlier, even with this range with the ricochet effect, you can give no 100 per cent guarantees in terms of the clearance from any area, can you?

Brig. McCann—It is not possible to give a 100 per cent guarantee but you can certainly provide a high level of confidence that there is a low probability that there will be a UXO.

CHAIR—I have one other question in an area we have not pursued, and that is the establishment of a large camp for army personnel. I would like to put on the record some assurance that the consequent sewerage load is going to be disposed of in a manner that is acceptable to all local people and that avoids contamination of creeks that may be supplying this area.

Brig. McCann—We have obligations under the EIS and the environmental management plan that has been produced. In addition, we will require, as part of the design and the construction of such facilities, that the facilities comply with all those environmental requirements and with the building codes. We have gained some experience with different technologies of toilet systems in the field. We have experimented to some degree with composting systems. We are now better informed on the strengths and weaknesses of some of those systems.

Some of the composting systems which rely on worms suffer from the disadvantage of being unable to cope with peak loads and then long periods of inactivity which tend to be typical of some training areas. We are now sensitive to that and where we have uniform loads we will probably continue with the use of larger scale composting systems. If we do not have uniform loads we will go back to more traditional methods of packaged sewerage treatment plants.

CHAIR—Thank you, Brigadier McCann. I thank Defence for appearing.

[11.05 a.m.]

BUNNELL, Councillor Ann, Townsville City Council, Walker Street, Townsville, Queensland 4810

KAY, Mr David John, Senior Planner, Townsville City Council, Department of Planning and Development, Administration Building, Walker Street, Townsville, Queensland 4810

CHAIR—Welcome. The committee has received a submission from the Townsville City Council dated 10 October 1996. Do you wish to propose any amendment?

Ms Bunnell—Yes I do, Mr Chair. I have an amendment to our submission at 5.3 headed, ‘The features of economic impacts from the construction of the infrastructure in Townsville Field Training Area project R’. I wish to amend the figures outlined there. Additional growths output should be \$34.3 million, a contribution to gross state product should be \$16.6 million, a contribution to wages and salary should be \$9 million and full-time and part-time employment should be 324 persons.

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

The document read as follows—

CHAIR—Do you wish to make a short opening statement, including comments on the amendments, before the committee proceeds to questions?

Ms Bunnell—I would like to thank the parliamentary committee for the opportunity to speak on the proposal relating to the Townsville field training area known as Dotswood. This area is not within the Townsville jurisdiction so my comments are that of an interested neighbour, as I said earlier. I would like to make a comment relating to the amendment before I go any further.

The Townsville City Council has merely copied the defence force figures that were provided by Gutteridge, Haskins and Davey Pty Ltd. I was very concerned at the small difference between the figures today and the figures yesterday. If there is any further information it should be sought from that base. These were the consulting engineers and town planners for the defence force, I believe.

CHAIR—That was a concern that the committee also shared. Mr Hatton raised it with me this morning. We are coming at this from the same perspective.

Ms Bunnell—I thank Mr Hatton for raising it with me. It gave me an opportunity to seek out the error. There was a typographical error on our part.

CHAIR—The difference was not as significant as it may have been. It has not caused great alarm, but I am grateful that it has been sorted out.

Ms Bunnell—Would you like me to speak to the proposal in general?

CHAIR—I would like you to indicate the things that you are either excited about or unhappy about in terms of the proposal, either as a neighbour or as the deputy mayor, whichever role you think is appropriate.

Ms Bunnell—Well, the development of defence facilities in northern Australia as outlined in the various defence services reports and the allocation of significant defence training facilities in the Townsville region is supported. The selection of the Dotswood site rather than the Shoalwater Bay site—and I know you have had extensive discussion about this this morning—is preferable given the environmental constraints and restricted area of use of Shoalwater Bay. Dotswood is also in close proximity to the Townsville defence force permanent base facilities at Garbutt and Lavarack.

The effects of the soil degradation and the natural vegetation regeneration from the overuse of the land are real problems to all land owners, particularly in the dry tropics, and that is why I mention this. As you know, Townsville City Council is also in the dry tropics. Our council, as the custodian of many public areas, is well aware of the difficulties in controlling land degradation resulting from overuse and encourages the environmental importance off resting areas to promote regrowth.

We would be very pleased to offer the Defence Force any assistance given our experience of erosion control and landcare practices that we are developing within our own council. We would like to be of assistance wherever possible. We have worked with Mr Alan Barton on many community projects and we have a very good working relationship with him. I would just like to put on record that we are happy to continue and give any advice we can. We would like clarification of the proposed relocation of range control staff from Lavarack Barracks to the Horne Dam area.

CHAIR—There will be an opportunity for Defence to respond before the hearing closes.

Ms Bunnell—As I said yesterday, we encourage the use of small construction packages which allow for competitive tendering for projects by local contractors. Short-term economic benefits from construction and refurbishment works as well as ongoing commodity consumption will produce an economic multiplier effect for employment in the Townsville region and we are very supportive of that.

CHAIR—Mr Kay, do you wish to make any preliminary comments?

Mr Kay—No, I have nothing further to add.

CHAIR—Councillor Bunnell, you have expressed understandable concern about what happens with land degradation and overuse, but I put it to you—this is not my first visit to Townsville, as I indicated yesterday, you only need one invitation to get me here, but it was my first visit to the field training area—that when flying over the field training area I was struck by the fact that in spite of the use the old field training areas seemed to be in better condition than the unused Dotswood Station, particularly in its southern portion.

Ms Bunnell—Again, I am only speaking as a neighbour, but we are very aware of the effort the army has put into regenerating areas under their control. I have seen great strides in the last few years with the defence force in terms of environmental landcare practices. Does that answer your question?

CHAIR—Yes, it does. I gather what you are actually saying is that you are not critical of the army's effort to regenerate nor are you apprehensive about their ownership of Dotswood, but you are seeking maximum cooperation and, in a neighbourly sense, that there are experiences that families here have had over generations that defence may find helpful?

Ms Bunnell—I did not intend to give the impression I was concerned. I am fully confident that the defence force will look after that land. I was merely offering our expertise, if you like, as custodians of public ground. We are offering to share our experience and knowledge with the defence force if they should seek it. I am very

confident that they will care for that land, especially given my experience with the army over the past few years.

CHAIR—Councillor Bunnell, unless you have any other comments to make, I thank you for appearing before us. I thank Mr Kay for joining you.

[11.15 a.m.]

MOON, Mr Eric John, Secretary, Upper Burdekin Progress Association, Mail Service 913, Burdekin Bridge, Charters Towers, Queensland 4820

CHAIR—The committee has received a submission from the Upper Burdekin Progress Association dated 7 October 1996. Do you propose any amendments?

Mr Moon—No.

CHAIR—It is proposed that the submission and the Department of Defence response be received, taken as read and incorporated in the transcript of evidence. Do members have any objections? If not it is so ordered.

The documents read as follows—

CHAIR—Do you wish to make a short statement to the committee before we proceed to questions?

Mr Moon—Yes, I would. The Upper Burdekin Progress Association is a group of local graziers and business people and includes members from Greenvale, Townsville and Charters Towers. It is situated in the Dalrymple Shire. It takes in the west and the north-west of the shire and people outside the shire. The aims of the association are for the progress of roads, schools, social justice, business, tourism and matters of a daily need and also assisting neighbours outside the shire. With your approval I would like to discuss the Hervey Range Development Road which passes through the High Range training area and runs through to the Gregory Development Road.

CHAIR—You certainly have my approval because it sounds as though it relates more to the project than a number of the questions that were asked this morning did.

Mr Moon—I will try not to drag it out. The Hervey Range Development Road runs from Townsville to the west where it meets the Gregory Development Road. Its total distance is 132 kilometres, of which 78 kilometres is dirt. It has two major bridges, the Star River and the Burdekin River, which were erected and completed in 1975. The road is used for cattle movements, mines, tourism, military use and exercises, business and access to Townsville and Thuringowa Hospital. The two bridges when erected were built to defence standards, with track wearing surfaces. The road accesses the Gulf and Townsville and is the shortest route to Karumba.

I will outline the history to date of the Hervey Range Development Road. It was originally formed as a beef road to allow for cattle marketing and agistment for the coastal areas and vice versa. It was alleged that a shire chairman who did not wish to lose business in the Charters Towers area, downgraded the Hervey Range Development Road from beef to development status. The road has had poor funding and poor maintenance. So bad was the state funding that some graziers in the Paynes Lagoon area re-routed some seven kilometres of the road so as to gain access to Townsville. This road is still in existence and graded by the shire.

In 1993, our association contacted Queensland transport via Mr Ian Rose, a director in Townsville, and called for major works on the road. We were advised that assessment of rural roads was typical. I was then advised that I would personally provide assessment on the road. In 1994, a 41 page summary was provided which resulted in meetings with engineers and planners. The result is that the road is now on the road implementation program and is costed at \$22 million on today's figures, and has a benefit cost ratio of 2.7.

The road is not accessible in the wet. Part of the initial works will be to raise by elevated platforms Keelbottom Creek, Boundary Creek, Stockyard Creek and Spring Creek. As part of the Defence high range training area, sealing was to follow in an eight-

year program. We consider this is too long and would take our waiting time up to 29 years of waiting. I have a little pun on the bottom here, Mr Chairman: Thailand can get a \$50 million bridge over the Mekong River, and I have bracketed 'charity'.

CHAIR—We are not the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Committee, that is the difficulty.

Mr Moon—I have titled this one 'Considerations'. The road has caused deaths of five people, with the last as current as 21 October, which was last Monday. Cattle carried to market are downgraded from Japanese market to American market due to bruising, which is a loss for the industry. Cattle down from the north incur a \$6 a head freight having to go via Charters Towers to Townsville. Servicing government contracts to the north, such as Mornington Island and Doomadgee, costs the state and federal governments, for example, \$54,000 per road train operator each year.

Military use of the road is in excess in wet conditions. This may be denied by the Defence Department but we know they use the road. Military use for the road takes in some 70 kilometres with no input for works. The vehicle increase will add to our woes when the infrastructure goes in.

Summary: The Upper Burdekin Progress Association Inc. request that the committee believe that we have a valid reason for major expenditure by the Department of Defence, starting with \$5 million over five years or sooner. Further, the state is contributing \$22 million over eight years. The expertise of the military unit now finished in Weipa should be put to use on the road and then start to the north, where the roads require the same development as we require.

With the new infrastructure to go in at Dotswood training area, how will the unit move in and out when the wet arrives? We believe the federal government should be more involved in this important road and should classify it No. 1. Our social justice should be considered. I have the 41-page summary which I mentioned earlier which I will submit to the committee for their perusal later. If I can be of any help with questions, I will be most pleased to do so.

CHAIR—I just wish to seek some clarification, Mr Moon. We are talking, I presume, about the road from Townsville to the eastern boundary of the training area.

Mr Moon—That is the specific road you are talking about.

CHAIR—You are talking about?

Mr Moon—No, I am talking about from Townsville to the Gregory development road, which passes through the Dotswood area.

CHAIR—Right. Let me rephrase this. Is the access from Townsville to the east of the field training area a sealed road?

Mr Moon—That is a sealed road, yes.

CHAIR—My understanding was that that sealed road then runs into the field training area, in towards the old Dotswood Station homestead for some kilometres.

Mr Moon—Yes. It is not far past the entry to the training area, which is on the sealed surface, that the dirt road starts and then goes right through up to the Dotswood Station top end or the western end and links up with the road to Mingela. I have not done a kilometre check on it, but I would say it would be in the vicinity of 30 kilometres or something like that.

CHAIR—So the Hervey Range Development Road is the only east-west road currently being used by army and shared by surrounding local land-holders.

Mr Moon—That is right.

CHAIR—The army has indicated in their evidence this morning that a considerable sum of money has been set aside specifically to ensure that road crossings and creek crossings are upgraded so that they are not actually damaging the Hervey Range Developmental Road when they move north and south.

Mr Moon—Yes. That probably would not have a big bearing on the actual running surface, but that would be access I would think.

CHAIR—Mind you, if they did not do it, it would have a big bearing on the running surface. With respect, if you rolled a tank or two over it north and south—

Mr Moon—That is a bonus.

CHAIR—I would also have thought that it is not reasonable to expect the Commonwealth to be solely responsible for the upgrade of this road and that it ought to be at the very least a shared facility with state government because the state government use must be comparable with anything that Defence can impact on it.

Mr Moon—Yes. Their contribution is \$22 million.

CHAIR—Over eight years.

Mr Moon—Over eight years. All we are asking for is \$5 million over five years from the Department of Defence budget.

CHAIR—That seems like a fairly sizeable portion of the whole cost.

Mr Moon—Not really when you consider that it is \$4.85 a square metre for roadworks these days. It does not last very long.

CHAIR—The \$5 million over five years means that you are asking the Commonwealth for a \$25 million contribution.

Mr Moon—No. We are asking for \$1 million a year over five years.

CHAIR—I beg your pardon. One million dollars a year over five years. I do not know about other committee members, but I misunderstood that request. The other comment that you made with which I would take some issue—and this is as a Commonwealth member—was that Defence were making no input for the works that were being undertaken. But Defence have already indicated under oath that, while they are under no obligation, they make an ex gratia payment in place of rates to your shire, which must be something the shire would be very pleased to see.

Mr Moon—I realised that the sum is \$25,000 and that is from the agistment money. That is a contribution, but by today's standards, by the time a shire has put a grader camp on site on the road and has gone one or two kilometres up the road, that would be the end of that amount of money. So, whilst it is appreciated, and while I would not like to see the shire lose it, I would like to see it multiplied by the Department of Defence budget.

CHAIR—I understand that. I merely wanted to have it clearly understood that the presence of Defence have meant that the income to the shire has remained at least static because they have accepted a responsibility to at least replicate what Dotswood Station would previously have made available in shire rates, or maybe more. There is no breakdown in the road surface from Townsville until within some 10 or so kilometres inside—

Mr Moon—I think the total distance from Townsville—I was corrected on this a little earlier—is about 40 or 45 kilometres.

CHAIR—How far does that get us inside the training area?

Mr Moon—I am not really familiar with the actual boundaries of the training area, but it is not far past the actual entry gate, as I know it.

CHAIR—Thank you. So for the purposes of this exercise: from Townsville to within five or 10 kilometres inside the training area, the road is unaffected by Defence because it is a sealed road made to carry those sorts of loads anyway. Defence have indicated that they are prepared to minimise their damage on that Hervey Range road by

ensuring that they cross at specific points that are deliberately hardened to take that sort of work. It would seem to me that Defence have done all they can to be neighbourly. The next question is really only the question of what responsibility the Commonwealth has to assist in the upgrade of the road, given the Commonwealth's presence in this training area.

Mr Moon—The organisation—not necessarily myself—really believes that we have it on facts and figures which I will be leaving with you today, that it is the shortest route to the Gulf. We believe that it is a major military road. You are looking at 78 kilometres of dirt. Once this road is brought up to a sealed standard, they go straight onto bitumen road again, and they do not go off it, and they go straight north. To go from Townsville through Cairns up through the Kennedy Development Road to the Gulf is substantially longer. To go from Townsville via Charters Towers north was, we know, at least 100 kilometres longer.

When military movements such as exercises take place, if you multiply 600 vehicles by the cost savings in fuel alone, heading north, it is quite a big sum. All we want is some contribution from the Commonwealth to assist. We do not say they have a responsibility, it is just that it is being used for military use and we would like them to respond.

CHAIR—I am sure you are right because you live in the area and you know the most direct route and the damage that indirect routes do to the cattle industry—you have indicated that by the bruising that occurs. Your understandable plea for this to be declared, for example, a national highway and therefore under the Commonwealth's care and control, is not the responsibility of my committee.

One of the responsibilities of my committee is to ensure, in the case of the acquisition of Dotswood Station and its upgrade for training purposes, that the expenditure is wise: not only that the expenditure is wise, but in addition to that that any disadvantage that the local community faces, particularly the road users, is in some way compensated for by the Commonwealth or the Department of Defence.

I will recall the Defence witnesses and they will have an opportunity to put their point of view. I am merely putting it to you that they have already shown a willingness to minimise their impact on the road and furthermore I would have thought in their own interest they would be upgrading the road in order to allow better access to the training area, and this will be to the advantage of all the road users.

Mr Moon—We welcome the army there. We wish them well and we hope in the future to socialise, as well. But you must appreciate the frustration of the people out there. We have waited 21 years now, and now we have been told that we have to wait another eight: that is 29 years without a sealed road. It is a little bit hard and all we want is some consideration.

I might be asking too much—\$1 million a year—but I do not think I am. We just want some consideration because the vehicular traffic is increasing daily—not so much by the military, but it will. It is increasing daily because people are realising that it is the shortest way north and it is compacting a lot of problems on the road's surface. The shire used to grade the road 2.5 times a year. We get one grade a year now. We had to wait nearly nine months to get one grade on the road. There are so many ifs and buts. It is something that should be considered. We are making a plea, in other words.

CHAIR—I would not want you to think me unsympathetic to the concerns of your progress association. I represent a rural electorate in which, as you would be well aware, the Australian National Railway is being increasingly downgraded as a grain moving technique. So there has been greater and greater weight put on rural arterial roads in South Australia by the movement of grain. I am not at all unhappy about your appearance here or the evidence you have presented. I merely thought to be frank with you about the fact that the role of this committee is not to upgrade the road to national highway status.

The role of the committee is to ensure that the development proposed does not impact unfairly on local residents or local road users. We will certainly be putting that to both Defence and the Commonwealth. Your plea for additional road funding, while better directed at me rather than Mr Hollis, nonetheless needs to come through a source other than the Public Works Committee. However, I have an obligation to ensure that the proposal does not disadvantage you in any way. If anything, hopefully it has been of benefit and ensures that the time you have been told you will be waiting for a sealed road is reduced because of the additional usage that the road is getting and its military importance.

Mr Moon—I appreciate that, Mr Chairman.

CHAIR—Are there any other comments you wish to make, Mr Moon? I am happy to see that there is an awareness of what you are saying, but I am trying to keep it in the context of this hearing.

Mr Moon—On behalf of the association, I thank the committee for this hearing. It is my first hearing, and I think you are doing a fine job.

CHAIR—That is very generous, thank you. I will now recall the witnesses from the Department of Defence. I welcome Brigadier McCann. As Defence will be aware, some specific questions were asked. There were two principal ones. The first was from the Deputy Mayor of Townsville City Council acting in a largely private capacity, asking what the arrangements would be for staff movements as a result of the range control at Lavarack Barracks being relocated to Horne Dam. There were also some questions from the Upper Burdekin Progress Association about road damage. I invite you to respond to those and any others that you may wish to respond to.

Brig. McCann—Firstly, I am grateful for the offer that the Townsville City Council has made to assist us with environmental management. I am pleased to hear that a good working relationship exists with army's north Queensland environmental officer, Mr Alan Barton. While on the subject of the environmental management issue, if you do not object, Mr Chairman, I will ask Mr Hartley to elaborate a little on that aspect of the council's submission.

Mr Hartley—Councillor Bunnell rightly raised the issues of overuse pressures, and vegetation and erosion control as key elements of land management in this area, and they are certainly key elements of the environmental management of TFTA. They were identified as such in the EIS process, and were the subject of specific comment by the environment minister in the environment minister's recommendations that arose from the EIS process. These issues are specifically addressed in detail in the environmental management plan that was developed for TFTA and were prime issues for consideration in the environmental studies that were associated with this project.

I should also point out that the range construction and management plan which has been developed for army for this project includes a soil and water management plan. I believe, as Brigadier McCann said, that council's comments and offer of assistance are much appreciated and I am sure also that the good relationships between council and army's environmental management staff will continue.

Brig. McCann—Moving to the next issue raised by the Townsville City Council: the range control staff. It is our intention that the 13 people who work with the range control organisation will commute from Townsville to TFTA to work each day. The only person living on site at the range control office at Horne Dam will be a caretaker. We certainly do not have any intention of moving 13 people into new houses out by Horne Dam. There will only be the one caretaker.

The Hervey Range Developmental Road: this is a difficult issue and we are very sensitive to community interests in this regard. My understanding is that that developmental road is a state government responsibility, and that the Queensland Department of Transport has contracted out the maintenance of the road to the Dalrymple Shire Council.

In my evidence earlier I said that the environmental impact assessment which we have undertaken has estimated that 10 per cent of all road users could be military traffic on the development road. So we are not denying that we are a user of the road, we are a 10 per cent user of the road, estimated.

We currently pay an ex gratia payment in lieu of rates to the Dalrymple Shire Council for them to put to road maintenance. This is a policy which we apply Australia wide, and where a local authority can demonstrate that they are indeed suffering from army use of an access road, then we do make a contribution to local councils for roads of

access maintenance. That is negotiated on a case by case basis. It is true that the present ex gratia payment is linked to the revenue lease of the former Dotswood property, but we will review that and look at making that contribution on similar lines to other maintenance of roads of access with other local authorities.

As far as using army engineers to build or to reconstruct the development road, a number of issues are relevant. Firstly, the army needs to be sensitive to getting out and competing with the civil construction industry and undertaking work. Our core business is not about maximising profits through economic activity. Army engineers would only be employed on such a task if it provided training value and if it were acceptable to the construction industry and to government. I am aware that in previous years similar suggestions have been raised for army engineers to construct these development roads. Some of the proposals go back over 20 years.

There is a mechanism whereby the community can seek army assistance, and it is under a policy known as 'Defence Force Assistance to the Civil Community'. I am sure that, if the progress association approached the local administrative centre, Lieutenant Colonel Dawson's office could probably provide further advice on making a proposal to the army for Defence Force assistance to the civil community task. Those tasks are considered on a case-by-case basis, and there is a requirement to recover the additional operating costs which the army would incur if the army engineers went out and worked on such a job.

There is a mechanism. I applaud Mr Moon's efforts in coming here and representing his community and making a submission. I have certainly made note of what he said. While there are no promises here—I realise that there are lots of bids on Defence Force assistance to the civil community, and major tasks have not been undertaken for some time—everything is worth a try. As far as the defence budget contributing \$5 million over five years to the upgrade of the Hervey Range Development Road goes, I would not be confident that that would be an acceptable call on defence outlay. In fact, those responsibilities clearly lie with the state government.

CHAIR—Can I interrupt? I think the call was for the Commonwealth rather than Defence, if I was to understand Mr Moon's application correctly. Once again, I recognise the validity of your claim that it is fundamentally a state government or a cooperative Commonwealth-state government responsibility.

Brig. McCann—There are other mechanisms. If the local authority feels that a Commonwealth presence is disadvantaging them in any way, there are mechanisms to seek funding through the Grants Commission. Maybe that is not very helpful advice, but I would certainly like Mr Moon to recognise that we are very sensitive to community interests and we would like to help just as much as we can. That is all I have to say on the two non-defence witness submissions, Mr Chairman. There is only one other matter I would like to raise.

CHAIR—I will just ask Mr Hollis if he has any questions about the non-defence witnesses.

Mr HOLLIS—No.

CHAIR—I would only add, Brigadier McCann, that I will speak to Mr Moon at the conclusion of this hearing. I do not think that he or the members of the Upper Burdekin Progress Association—and, I am sure that neither did you, sir—envisage that he would come in here and leave with a cheque in his hand to solve the problem. But he has come to make a plea that we all understand; and we want to assure him that, while this may not be the most direct channel through which his plea should be made, it has not been ignored, and that the responsibility that also should be borne by the state will be brought to the attention of state members, as well. Thank you, Brigadier McCann.

Brig. McCann—Mr Chairman, because we would like to commence work fairly quickly on this proposal, subject to your committee's examination and report to parliament, we would like to seek your agreement to seek registrations of interest and requests for tender for the role of project manager for the TFTA works prior to the expediency motion for the project. Subject to the passing of an expediency motion, construction is planned to commence as soon as possible. To enable this, the registration of interest process will need to commence in mid-November, followed by a request for tender in late December.

The seeking of registrations of interest and requests for tender does not commit the Commonwealth in any way, and registrants will be advised that the proposed works remain subject to parliamentary approval and no contract would be entered into without parliamentary approval of this project. I have a letter to table to that effect.

CHAIR—Thank you, Brigadier McCann. As I indicated yesterday when you made a similar request relative to the Black Hawk project, this committee meets every sitting Thursday and we will consider that matter and respond to you as soon as we can.

Brig. McCann—Thank you, Mr Chairman.

CHAIR—Is there any other evidence that Defence wishes to submit or any other response that it wants to bring to our attention?

Brig. McCann—Mr Chairman, as for yesterday, I would like to record Defence's appreciation to council for their assistance in not only helping us with the development of various proposals but in assisting with the administrative arrangements for this hearing. We are very grateful for that support and the personal efforts from the council members involved. That is all.

CHAIR—Thank you, Brigadier. Thank you, Defence. As there are no further

questions, it is proposed that the documents lodged with the committee be received, taken as read and incorporated in the transcript of evidence. Do members have any objections? There being no objection, it is so ordered.

The documents read as follows—

CHAIR—Before closing this hearing, I would like to echo the sentiments of Brigadier McCann. I would like to thank those who assisted not only with this hearing but also with our visit to Townsville on this occasion. I would like to thank the witnesses who have appeared before the committee today and those who assisted, particularly from Defence, in our inspections yesterday afternoon. Special thanks too, Brigadier McCann, please, to your air crew who we did not have the opportunity to individually thank because of the logistics of leaving the aircraft. We appreciated the splendid job they did and the great professionalism they displayed in their handling of both the briefings and the Black Hawk helicopters.

I would also like to thank the Council of the City of Townsville. I am sorry that Deputy Mayor Bunnell had to leave us, but I would once again record our appreciation to the Council of the City of Townsville for making this venue available for the public hearing. I would also thank—though they are now somewhat depleted as the result of flights and other exercises—committee members, particularly the Deputy Chairman, Mr Hollis, for his patience and perseverance, *Hansard* and the secretariat. Mr Hollis, would you care to move the motion concerning the publication of evidence?

Motion (moved by **Mr Hollis**) agreed to:

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

CHAIR—This committee stands adjourned.

Subcommittee adjourned at 11.53 a.m.