



**COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA**

**JOINT PARLIAMENTARY  
COMMITTEE**

on

**PUBLIC WORKS**

**Reference: Development of facilities for No. 6 Squadron at RAAF Base Amberley**

**AMBERLEY**

**Friday, 14 March 1997**

**OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT**

**CANBERRA**

## JOINT COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS

### Members:

Mr Andrew (Chair)

Senator Calvert  
Senator Ferguson  
Senator Murphy

Mr Richard Evans  
Mr Forrest  
Mr Grace  
Mr Hollis  
Mr Lees

**WITNESSES**

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<b>TOOTH, Wing Commander John Marsden, Project Director, Facilities and Property Division, Department of Defence, CP3-3-20, Campbell Park Offices, Australian Capital Territory 2600 . . . . .</b>	<b>3</b>

JOINT COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS

*Development of facilities for No. 6 Squadron at RAAF Base Amberley*

AMBERLEY

Friday, 14 March 1997

Present

Mr Andrew (Chair)

Senator Calvert

Mr Forrest

Senator Ferguson

Mr Hatton

Senator Murphy

Mr Hollis

The committee met at 9.30 a.m.

Mr Andrew took the chair.

**CHAIR**—I declare open this public hearing into the proposed development of facilities for No. 6 Squadron at RAAF Base Amberley, Queensland. This project was referred to the Public Works Committee for consideration and report to parliament by the House of Representatives on 10 October 1996, at an estimated out-turn cost of \$10.25 million.

In accordance with subsection 17(3) of the Public Works Committee Act 1969:

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

Yesterday afternoon the committee was briefed on RAAF Base Amberley and the project under consideration. The committee also inspected the base and inspected existing facilities occupied by No. 6 Squadron, which are proposed for refurbishment or replacement with new facilities.

RAAF Base Amberley is in the federal electorate of Oxley, which is represented by Ms Pauline Hanson. It is in the state electorate of Ipswich West, which is represented by Mr Donald Livingstone. The committee extended an invitation to both the federal and state members to be present during the site inspection and the public hearing today. Today the committee will hear evidence from the Department of Defence.

**BICEVSKIS, Mr Peter Andrei, Director, James Cubitt Architects Pty Ltd, 123 Charlotte Street, Brisbane, Queensland 4000**

**HAMWOOD, Group Captain Jonathan Scott, Officer Commanding No. 301 Air Base Wing, RAAF Base Amberley, Queensland 4306**

**LANE, Group Captain Brian John, Director of Facilities Planning and Engineering, Department of Defence, CP3-3-16, Campbell Park Offices, Australian Capital Territory 2600**

**SHEPHERD, Group Captain Geoffrey David, Officer Commanding No. 82 Wing, Department of Defence, 82WG Headquarters, RAAF Base Amberley, Queensland 4306**

**TOOTH, Wing Commander John Marsden, Project Director, Facilities and Property Division, Department of Defence, CP3-3-20, Campbell Park Offices, Australian Capital Territory 2600**

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

**Group Capt. Lane**—There are a number of amendments to the statement of evidence that I would like to make. On page 3, paragraph 2, insert a new dot point after the first dot point, ‘Refurbishment of Hangar 373’. On page 13, paragraph 35, at the end of the paragraph insert the sentence, ‘For Hangar 373, minor engineering services works will be required together with replacement cladding’. On page 14, paragraph 38, delete the paragraph in total. On page 22, third dot point, delete in total. On page 23, last dot point, after the last sentence insert a new sentence, ‘The sealing of an existing gravel car park to provide 34 car parks for 6SQN personnel is also proposed’. On page 24, subparagraph b, first dot point, delete the words, ‘and the Main Entry Control Guard House’. On page 24, subparagraph b, insert a new dot point after the last dot point, ‘Structural upgrading’. On page 26, paragraph 57, amend the words ‘early 1997’ to read ‘mid 1997’. On page 28, paragraph 64, amend the cost ‘\$54 million’ to read ‘\$55.5 million’.

At annex D, page 1, first paragraph, second line, delete the first two words ‘would be’. At annex D, page D9, within the table, under the list headed ‘Description’, delete the dot point ‘armoury’. On same page, under the list headed ‘Purpose’, delete the last dot point ‘secure storage for small arms on issue to Squadron personnel’. Also, on the same page, delete the last sentence on the page, ‘The armoury stores 150 Steyer rifles and 25 Gloc pistols’. Finally, at annexe E5, delete all reference to ‘Room 10.5 Armoury’. I request that the amendments be recorded in *Hansard*.

**CHAIR**—Thank you, Group Captain Lane. The amendments will be recorded in

*Hansard.* It is proposed that the submission, as amended, be received, taken as read and incorporated in the transcript of evidence. Is it the wish of the committee that the document be incorporated in the transcript of evidence? There being no objection, it is so ordered.

*The document read as follows—*

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

**Group Capt. Lane**—The summary statement reads as follows: the Department of Defence advocates the construction of replacement technical, administrative and support facilities for No. 6 squadron at RAAF Base Amberley. The Australian Defence Force is required to maintain a strike and reconnaissance capability with F111 aircraft.

Defence has examined the potential capabilities of its F111 force and, with the avionics update to this aircraft and procurement of additional aircraft, envisages their retention in service for the next 15 to 20 years. RAAF Base Amberley is to be retained as the home base for the RAAF's F111 strike and reconnaissance force and as the location of the strike reconnaissance group headquarters.

No. 6 Squadron is one of the RAAF's two operational strike and reconnaissance squadrons. The current facilities are mostly old and lack adequate soundproofing, environmental control and space. Some of the present deficiencies include: noise levels within No. 6 Squadron's flight line office exceed recommended standards; most ancillary maintenance, support and training activities are conducted in facilities which do not meet contemporary standards for the functions they fulfil; the ground support equipment workshop is housed in a partially enclosed temporary structure which presents work difficulties in wet weather; aircrew training is constrained by the inadequacy of training facilities; and full security screening of sensitive areas within the headquarters building cannot be achieved. There is a need to ensure that hangarage is available for the storage of six attrition spare F111 aircraft.

The proposed works comprise: construction of two new annexes to the existing F111 maintenance hangar to accommodate operational, administrative, training, workshops, and supply functions; minor engineering services works and replacement of cladding to the existing Hangar 373, which is to be used as No. 6 Squadron's maintenance hangar; minor refurbishment of two existing Bellman hangars; and provision of engineering services and car parks, demolitions and site works.

The out-turn estimated cost of the works is \$10.25 million, including construction costs, professional fees and charges, furniture and fittings, and a contingency provision. Subject to parliamentary approval of this proposal, tenders would be called in mid-1997, with the objective of having construction completed by March 1998.

The proposed new facilities would enhance the overall operational effectiveness of No. 6 Squadron by facilitating management of day-to-day activities, enabling more effective training of aircrew and overcoming existing occupational health and safety problems.



An environmental certificate of compliance has been issued for the proposed works. There are no direct environmental implications resulting from the provision of the proposed facilities. No heritage implications are evident.

Commonwealth, state and local representatives and instrumentalities have been advised or consulted. Mr Chairman, that concludes the opening summary statement.

**CHAIR**—Thank you, Group Captain Lane. I now open the hearing to questions. Group Captain Lane, from my point of view as chairman of the Public Works Committee, given what we saw yesterday, there is not much doubt of the need for this project. The comparison between No. 6 Squadron and No. 1 Squadron is dramatic enough to convince anybody of the need to upgrade these facilities.

The question that bothers me is: what do you see as the future of Amberley? We as a committee are familiar with Tindal and obviously have been briefed on the priority that everyone in this room is aware of—that is, the need for there to be a focus on defence in the north. Is Amberley appropriately located to offer the sort of back-up to places such as Curtin, so far to the west, or Tindal, or should we be looking to relocate the squadrons entirely to a more central location?

**Group Capt. Lane**—Amberley is in the appropriate location. As you have been briefed, the emphasis has been on a number of established bases in the north, and bare bases. I believe that the most appropriate person who would be able to answer that question is my colleague, Group Captain Shepherd. Perhaps he would be able to elaborate on that.

**Group Capt. Shepherd**—Present RAAF studies indicate that Amberley will remain the major base for the RAAF strike reconnaissance force into the next century to the life of type of the aircraft. These studies are still at their formative stage and have yet to be approved at the higher defence processes. But, in essence, the deeper maintenance activities and the infrastructure and technological support required by the aircraft will make it necessary that all those activities be conducted in the rear area of Australia where the technology and industrial complexes lay. To permanently base the aircraft north would be feasible but would incur a maintenance burden.

**CHAIR**—You referred to a maintenance burden. I would have thought, climatically, that this may be a more corrosive atmosphere in which to have the aircraft stored than Tindal, for example. The experience that the committee has had with, for example, the corrosion on Black Hawk choppers would suggest that the east coast tends to pose more problems in corrosion terms. Would you like to comment on whether or not the aircraft life is likely to be affected by their location at Amberley?

**Group Capt. Shepherd**—It is a technical question, so I will answer that in broad terms. Amberley does not suffer from very much salt laden air. We are behind a small

range of hills between us and the Brisbane coast—behind Moreton Bay in any event—and we do not normally get the sea breezes this far in. So the problem as it relates to Townsville, with the sea breezes coming across the airfield, does not exist here. The aircraft are not just stored, in any event; they are stored and maintained. The maintenance process throughout the storage cycle and throughout the operating cycle takes that into account.

If you look at the Tindal environment, while it does not have the salt air, it also has the harsher and drier temperatures in the dry season and then the wet. So that would have its own attendant problems in any event.

**Group Capt. Lane**—Can I just elaborate on that, Mr Chairman. I think the other point that we need to recognise is that the Black Hawk helicopter is operating in a coastal environment. We have an aircraft which is not marinised. With the impact of the salt laden environment, that does cause the aircraft some difficulties and the necessary protective measures have to be taken.

The F111 operates in a different environment. Normally, we call it a thick skinned aircraft. It does not suffer the same potential problems as the Black Hawk helicopter.

**CHAIR**—So there is no immediate advantage in dehumidifying hangars as we are doing for Black Hawks or, for example, enclosing the carports, as you call them, on the tarmac in order to extend the life of the F111?

**Group Capt. Lane**—No, Mr Chairman.

**CHAIR**—The only thing that strikes me is that, while this is a relatively small project by public works and defence standards, it is a critical project because whether or not this committee approves of the expenditure that is being sought it will have some bearing on a much larger project that we all know is planned for Amberley as part of the total Amberley refurbishment and which clearly would indicate that Amberley would continue as a prominent base from an air force strategic point of view.

From my point of view, the approval of the expenditure of the project before us would have some bearing on the approval of the \$50-odd million alluded to in your report. It seems to me then that we should not lose sight of the fact that this project is one around which the next project may well hang because it would be difficult to approve of one and not approve of the other.

**Group Capt. Lane**—Perhaps, Mr Chairman, I can just give some background. At RAAF Base Amberley we have been aware that there is a requirement to undertake significant redevelopment of the existing assets here on the base for some time. The emphasis has been in terms of the departmental priorities, to make sure that we do our development of the infrastructure in the north. It has always been recognised that there

was a requirement to provide the replacement technical facilities for No. 6 Squadron. In fact, it has always been the highest priority for this particular base.

A number of scenarios were looked at. We could bring this forward as an individual item. At one stage it was included in the base redevelopment. But because of the priority for the No. 6 Squadron technical facilities, it was advanced because we saw it as being the highest priority project. It provided us with time to develop the subsequent redevelopment.

We also had to make sure that we developed a master plan which provides us with the framework in which we can undertake our longer term development for the base. As a result of that, we have now developed a scope of works which we are proposing, subject to departmental endorsements, we will be able to bring before the committee later this year. But in advance of that, we had to develop the No. 6 Squadron technical facilities because it was seen as the most important project for the base.

**CHAIR**—Am I right then, Group Captain Lane, in presuming that if this project were not being referred to us today, we would be facing a base redevelopment project to the tune of \$66 million rather than \$56 million?

**Group Capt. Lane**—Yes, Mr Chairman.

**CHAIR**—So this has been accelerated, presumably, because the facilities are so desperately needed. Do you notice a difference in morale between No. 1 Squadron and No. 6 Squadron as a result of the working conditions?

**Group Capt. Shepherd**—Yes, there certainly has been a synergy obtained in the operations of No. 1 Squadron when it moved to Hangar 363 a couple of years ago. The co-location of all elements of a unit—the aircrew, the maintenance, the administrative and the intelligence—certainly makes for better and more efficient functioning of the organic structure of the squadron. Whilst morale is always an intangible thing, it is a lot easier to get the flow of communications throughout 1 Squadron than it is throughout 6 Squadron.

**Group Capt. Lane**—Can I also add that I believe that there are two significant benefits that will accrue from this proposal: firstly, in terms of overcoming the significant occupational health and safety issues; and, secondly, the other really significant issue is the impact of noise in the working environmental for the 6 Squadron personnel. I am sure that the rectification of those deficiencies will improve significantly the morale of those 6 Squadron personnel.

**CHAIR**—I presume that Amberley is generally seen as the sort of base that officers and other ranks welcome being posted to?

**Group Capt. Lane**—I believe that that would be a view that is held by quite a

number of people in the air force. They tend to look at Amberley as being one of the more favoured bases for postings.

**Mr HOLLIS**—Group Captain Lane, you mentioned the master plan. Going through the base yesterday, I noticed a whole collection of buildings of various ages and styles. Has the master plan been revised recently? Firstly, when was the master plan brought in and has it been revised? If so, when was it revised?

**Group Capt. Lane**—We produced a new master plan for RAAF Base Amberley last year. It is not quite 12 months old. We have looked at a 25-year horizon for the master plan. We are trying to project out to about to the year 2020 and to provide the framework within which we can accommodate current capabilities or any new capabilities in the future. The idea is to have a framework which is flexible and which is able to accommodate any new capabilities that may be directed to this base.

The plan is that the proposed redevelopment will be in accordance with the approved master plan. It would take some fairly significant activity at some time in the future to rectify other deficiencies that we have here on the base. Such a trigger could well be the replacement of the F111 weapon system. At that time we would be able to be sure about the future role of Amberley, its future use, and, if necessary, then take the necessary measures to undertake the rather radical rationalisation of those assets so that they are all located within the correct zones.

**Mr HOLLIS**—That would be like a 20-year time span?

**Group Capt. Lane**—That is what we would be looking at—about the year 2015 or something of that order.

**Mr HOLLIS**—The bombing range, if that is the correct title, at Evans Head is used by the base here. Is that correct?

**Group Capt. Lane**—Yes, it is.

**Mr HOLLIS**—What do you do? Do you go down there and practice on the beach or Evans Head or some place?

**Group Capt. Lane**—The Evans Head air weapons range is used for practice application bombing activities. It is used regularly by the F111 aircraft. In terms of amplification of that matter, my colleague may be able to assist.

**Group Capt. Shepherd**—Evans Head Air Weapons Range is used by 82 Wing, the F111 Wing, and 81 Wing, the Hornet wing, from Williamstown. But in the main it is used by 82 Wing. We effectively use it on nearly every sortie when we are home based out of Amberley. We do not drop live weapons there; we only drop practice weapons.

They consist of BDU33 bomblets—a 25-pound iron bomb with a phosphorous spotting charge in the nose. So there is no explosion to create environmental damage in that regard. The range is subject to the normal environmental controls. Group Captain Lane will be able to address those.

**Mr HOLLIS**—It is a great tourist attraction. Do you run into any flak from the locals?

**Group Capt. Shepherd**—We are mindful of the problems that we could cause with regards to noise and flight paths. They are continually being assessed. One of the issues at the moment is the light aircraft corridor. That is being addressed as part of air traffic upgrades.

**Mr HOLLIS**—Are there any plans or has any thought been given to moving the Evans Head air weapons range or is it a fixture there?

**Group Capt. Shepherd**—I am unaware of any plans to move it at the time. There may be studies going on. Group Captain Lane may be able to elaborate in that regard.

**Group Capt. Lane**—I am not aware of any plans to relocate the air weapons range. That planning decision would come out of our Facilities and Property Division. There is nothing that I am aware of at the moment.

**Mr HOLLIS**—But you avoided my other question: have there been any complaints from the residents of Evans Head or local people? I used to represent the Albatross area. Beecroft Peninsula was in that area. I was always getting complaints—and I am sure the local member there now constantly gets complaints—about what was going on at Beecroft. That was the navy though, not the RAAF.

**Group Capt. Lane**—I am unaware of any significant numbers of complaints. I have no doubt that there will have been some complaints by local residents. That is only natural, because of the fact that aircraft noise is perceived by different people in different ways. I am quite sure that there would have been some complaints, but I am not aware of any concerted series of complaints from the locals.

**Mr HOLLIS**—Leaving that aside, it has been mentioned to us a couple of times, and it is in the evidence here, that there is an amount of asbestos in the buildings here. What action is being taken now? I know that we hope to remove those buildings, but what action is being taken to minimise risk from asbestos in the existing buildings now?

**Group Capt. Lane**—The asbestos which is in the existing buildings, as I am advised, is old asbestos cement sheeting. The difficulty occurs when the asbestos cement sheeting is fractured and we can end up with the fibres. If there are any repairs, maintenance or whatever, the appropriate protective measures would need to be taken in

terms of any of the maintenance activities.

What we have done, as I have noticed when I have walked through the 6 Squadron and 82 headquarters facilities, is put up a number of signs saying, 'Beware: asbestos is present in the facility'. I think the real issue is making sure that any of our maintenance staff or contractors who would be working in the buildings are made fully aware of the presence of the asbestos.

**CHAIR**—Group Captain Lane, I have one further inquiry that I meant to raise earlier. In the amendments that you tabled at the opening of the hearing, you indicated that at page 14, paragraph 38, you would like to delete the paragraph which states:

The requirement also exists to provide under cover storage for attrition/rotation aircraft of the F-111 fleet.

But in your summary statement you said:

There is a need to ensure that hangarage is available for the storage of six attrition spare F111 aircraft.

Was the summary statement inconsistent? It would seem to me that the issue is really whether or not we need to provide storage for those aircraft that are held for attrition purposes.

**Group Capt. Lane**—The reason for the deletion of paragraph 38 is that we actually had two paragraphs 38. If you have a look on page 15, there is another paragraph 38, which says:

In addition, storage for six F-111 attrition/rotation aircraft is required.

What we were trying to do was to delete the anomaly of having two paragraphs 38.

**CHAIR**—I have been caught.

**Group Capt. Lane**—We were caught as well.

**Senator CALVERT**—Yesterday when we were looking at the old facilities, one could not help but wonder why it has taken you so long to bring this project forward. Obviously, those conditions have existed for quite some time. Yet there does not seem to have been any attempt to do anything about it.

**Group Capt. Lane**—As outlined in the evidence, we have indicated that the past uncertainties on the future of the F111s have really led us to the stage where we could have only minimum expenditure on our facilities. Now that the necessary studies on the life of type of the aircraft have been concluded and various update projects have been

commenced—for example, we mentioned yesterday the avionics update project—and also additional aircraft have been acquired, there is a degree of certainty that the aircraft will remain in service until the year 2020. We are now in a position where we can proceed with a degree of certainty and make sure that the facilities that we are providing are suitable for 6 Squadron.

Once again, going back to what I was saying about the redevelopment project that is coming forward later on, that degree of certainty has now given us the opportunity to be able to proceed with the redevelopment proposals which will be able to support many of the F111 operations and maintenance activities here on the base.

**Senator CALVERT**—Group Captain Shepherd gave us a very good run-down and briefing here yesterday on the weaponry systems and the advances of how bombers have gone from being carriers of tonnes and tonnes of bombs to machines that precisely attack targets. You are projecting the use of this place through to 2020 and your master plan is all geared up for that. But what is to say that by the year 2020 there has not been some whole new concept developed where you might not need these sorts of facilities?

**Group Capt. Lane**—The master plan provides us with the flexibility to be able to accommodate new capabilities that might be allocated to this establishment. We are working on the basis that we will have a replacement aircraft which will not be any larger, say, than the existing F111 aircraft. If we end up with a different type of aircraft or there is a different capability that will be allocated to RAAF Amberley—obviously, the role of the base will change—we believe that we have a master plan where we have the flexibility to be able to accommodate any of those new requirements.

**Senator CALVERT**—So the avionics and all the rest of it will still be applicable, will it not?

**Group Capt. Lane**—Yes.

**Senator CALVERT**—The Chair initially raised the question about whether Amberley should actually be here. I have noticed since I was here last, which was a year or so ago, that there seems to have been a fair amount of new subdivisional work reasonably adjacent to the base. Given the sort of pressure that was mounted in Sydney over the runway business there, do you ever have any discussions with the local area, towns and planners and all the rest of it about what might occur down the track? Are you concerned about public pressure building up against noise in the area?

**Group Capt. Lane**—If I can take the noise issue first, we have prepared an Australian noise exposure forecast, the ANEF, out to the year 2006. That particular forecast reflects the known aircraft types, the numbers of movements and the flight tracks. From that we have been able to take the various weightings in terms of the movements during the day and the movements at night. That has been discussed with the local

councils.

The ANEF has been used as a basis by which the local councils will look at the land utilisation or land zoning around the airfield. To date, we have had close cooperation with the various councils, including the Ipswich council. I believe its predecessor was called the Moreton shire. We do not believe that any of the urban development that might be occurring around this base will be to our detriment because it has been done in accordance with zonings that align with our 2006 ANEF contours.

**Senator MURPHY**—I do not think they would want to do it to their detriment either with \$130 million going into the economy. I do not think they would want to see the base closed.

**Group Capt. Lane**—I believe that is very true.

**Senator CALVERT**—In national terms, this is probably one of the bigger air bases. Would that be correct?

**Group Capt. Lane**—Yes.

**Senator CALVERT**—If you had to move it, say, in an emergency situation, there are other airfields that would cope, I suspect?

**Group Capt. Lane**—In terms of redeploying our F111 assets to another base, that is common practice with the squadrons.

**Senator CALVERT**—But you have the ability in this base to cope with extras. We have seen 1,000 marines here and you have that Galaxy out there and a lot of other planes. Obviously, by world standards it is quite a good base. Is that right?

**Group Capt. Lane**—Yes, that is the case. We have sufficient pavement here to cater for quite a range of aircraft that would come in in terms of exercises or deployments. If we wanted to have them permanently based here, we would have to build some additional facilities.

The other important thing that we would have to recognise is that there are constraints in terms of the numbers of squadrons that we may be able to have here in the future. We do run into other factors such as airspace considerations. Perhaps my colleague may wish to make some comments on that.

**Group Capt. Shepherd**—Only very briefly, Senator. Certainly Amberley more than well provides for the home based units here, Nos 1 and 6 Squadron and No. 38 Squadron. There are more than adequate facilities for those in terms of tarmac space, runway availability and available airspace. Studies to determine the future basing at



Amberley are being undertaken in Defence right now. They have yet to be finalised but they will also determine what extra facilities in terms of ramp space, et cetera, will be required.

**Senator CALVERT**—If we had an emergency—say in the South Pacific somewhere—and the Americans wanted to move in, this is the place they would come. Is that right?

**Group Capt. Shepherd**—Certainly there is the ramp space and runway availability that allows deployment of large numbers of aircraft here, as you see now with the Americans, as happens with the Singaporeans, and as often happens with Orion aircraft doing exercises out of here. So yes, that is true.

**Senator CALVERT**—You could take any type of aircraft in the world in here, or most types of aircraft?

**Group Capt. Shepherd**—Yes. There are some limitations on lighting and some of the display boards on the side of the runway need to be moved for some of the largest aircraft. We have had in here recently C5 Galaxies and Antinov 124s, both the biggest aircraft in the world.

**Senator CALVERT**—You can land any size plane in the world here?

**Group Capt. Shepherd**—Yes.

**Group Capt. Hamwood**—This exercise presently under way has stretched our aircraft parking facilities on the base to the extent where the C5 Galaxy you saw yesterday is actually parked on the threshold of a runway. This is a cross runway and it effectively blocks that runway. We have aircraft parked all around the airfield where we can get them and we are basically stretched to the limit of our parking resources here at the moment.

**Senator CALVERT**—In the master plan, all that new apron space would make up for the deficiency that you have now.

**Group Capt. Hamwood**—Yes, that is correct. We would see that as a desperately needed move.

**Senator CALVERT**—And you can land any plane in the world here?

**Group Capt. Hamwood**—Certainly we could land them here. Whether we would have the parking space for them at the moment, there is some doubt.

**Group Capt. Lane**—Senator Calvert, are you looking at the strength of the runway and taxiway systems?

**Senator CALVERT**—Yes.

**Group Capt. Lane**—I am reading now from my master plan. They say the military design aircraft included the following: the C5 or the B747, 707 aircraft, Hercules, F111s, the FA-18 Hornets, Caribou P3, HS748 and military helicopters.

The principle would be that we could end up with an aircraft which may be heavier than the normally rated weight for the particular pavement. We can operate those aircraft under a restriction basis. We might be allowed, for example, to operate one overweight aircraft a certain number of times in a three-month or six-month period. If we operate more frequently than that we can cause severe damage to the pavement. It would probably be right to say that we could operate any aircraft out of here but it may not be on a continuous basis; it would have to be on an infrequent basis.

**Senator CALVERT**—I had in mind the extra provisions further down the track that the chairman mentioned this morning. You have coped, as Group Captain Hamwood said, with an extra thousand troops and one Galaxy. Say, for argument's sake, you wanted 4,000 marines here and five Galaxy aircraft. You would really be in trouble, wouldn't you?

**Group Capt. Hamwood**—Yes, we could not cope with that at the moment.

**Senator CALVERT**—But given the master plan of what you are intending to do, you probably may be able to further down the track.

**Group Capt. Hamwood**—As far as the airfield resources go yes, as far as accommodation goes there would certainly be a question because, as you may have noticed yesterday, just about all our visitors are living under canvas which they brought with them.

**Senator CALVERT**—I have one other question, on behalf of one of our colleagues from the House of Representatives: how much of the work will be contracted out to local contractors? Do you have any idea? You would prefer to use local contractors if you could, I suppose.

**Group Capt. Lane**—The works will be advertised nationally in the *Weekend Australian* and also in the local *Courier Mail*. Obviously, in terms of the national advertising, all are able to submit submissions for the works, notwithstanding that we have many local contractors who have the capability to undertake the proposed works. Even if it were a national contractor, they would be subcontracting a lot of that work to the local businesses, so there is the flow-on effect if a local contractor does not win and act in the prime contractor role.

**Senator CALVERT**—The member for Oxley made the point to me. One of your

chaps was with us, and he was saying that the local contractors you have been using have been quite satisfactory, but you do not physically put into the contract documents that local subcontractors have to be used if they are available and if they are competitive, do you?

**Group Capt. Lane**—No, we do not do that. And that is our departmental policy.

**Senator MURPHY**—What prompted you to redevelop the master plan last year in terms of the certainty of the life of the F111? Was that something that had been studied for some time?

**Group Capt. Lane**—What we are doing is undertaking a series of master plans of all our establishments. The emphasis initially had to be for our northern bases because that was where we were undertaking the majority of our infrastructure development. That is where the departmental priority was, so we made sure that we fixed up our bases at Darwin and Tindal. Amberley was the next highest priority, so that was the next master plan that we developed.

We have subsequently developed, or we are in the process now of nearly completing, the master plans for Learmonth and Curtin, and we are about to undertake Edinburgh and Townsville. The idea is that we do have a consolidated master plan for all of our establishments so that any development works that we undertake are done within an agreed framework.

**Senator MURPHY**—As a matter of curiosity, how many of the F111 planes are operational? I thought somebody said yesterday there were 16.

**Group Capt. Shepherd**—The purchase of the additional 15 F111G aircraft in 1992 will give us a fleet composition of 36 or 37 aeroplanes, depending on which ones are broken down for spares. Our authorised aircraft establishment will remain at 24, which means effectively that we will have 24 in service and the rest will remain in storage. Of those 24 in service, a number will be going through maintenance cycles, freeing up the others for online operations.

**Senator MURPHY**—How many can actually fly at any one time?

**Group Capt. Shepherd**—It is a little bit of a variable figure, depending on the maintenance cycles, but it is in the order of magnitude of 16 to 18 aircraft.

**Senator MURPHY**—I was curious because I thought I heard, when we got the briefing yesterday, somebody say there were 16. I was looking in annex D of the submission where it mentions 12 aircraft.

**Group Capt. Shepherd**—Out of the 24 authorised aircraft limit, they would be

split between both squadrons, of course, so the submission relates particularly to 6 Squadron.

**Senator MURPHY**—I understand. Looking at the diagrams of the existing hangar 373, I assume the drawings with the two planes in the hangar are just to show that planes actually go in there and that it is not to scale. I thought when we walked through there yesterday that there were about four aircraft in there. I may be just being picky, but you said that your master plan is based on the possibility of a change in aircraft. From the diagram, I assume these aircraft have fold-back wing capability so for storage purposes you can get more in there and in some of the other drawings—for instance, in hangar 255 and 260—you have three aircraft in each. I am just curious about whether or not that is to scale.

**Mr Bicevskis**—The drawings are to scale.

**Group Capt. Shepherd**—If I could elaborate on that for you, Senator, it may clear up some points. Hangar 373 is currently being used to store aircraft which are not in flying condition and they are stored with their wings back to occupy minimum space. When performing maintenance on aeroplanes that are on line for flying activities, the wings have to be able to move through the full range. When ground support equipment, such as hydraulic mules, as we call them, hydraulic systems to operate the aircraft flight controls, are put around the aircraft at the nominal correct safety distances, there is really only room for two aircraft to undergo maintenance in hangar 373. Whereas if we store them in an inactive state, you can fit more in.

**Senator MURPHY**—Annexe E3 is the existing size. With the proposed increase in size, will that increase your capacity to put more in, or will it still be just two aircraft?

**Group Capt. Lane**—It will always remain as two aircraft, because that was the basis on which that hangar was designed. It was designed on the basis of a maintenance floor loading of two aircraft.

**Senator MURPHY**—So, if there is a change in the nature of aircraft, you have factored in a capacity for, say, one with a greater wing span or something? We would not want to find all of a sudden that we cannot get it through the door.

**Group Capt. Lane**—That is very true. We have said that we believe that a replacement for the F111 will be no larger than the F111 aircraft as it currently is.

**Senator MURPHY**—The other question I had was with regard to the land mass. I thought we were informed yesterday that it was 2,500 hectares.

**Group Capt. Hamwood**—The Department of Defence owns land that is beyond the immediate vicinity of the airfield. A lot of this is leased to private people who use it

for agricultural purposes, but we own that land and we can reclaim it.

**Senator MURPHY**—So the 1,600 hectares that is referred to in this submission is the area within the base boundary?

**Group Capt. Lane**—That is the central core of the base and additional land that we have acquired over the years to provide us with a buffer from the point of view of explosive ordnance safeguarding distances and for noise buffer zones, because it ties back into our ANEF and also the effect of noise on the local community. As land has become available we have acquired it to provide us with the necessary buffer to maintain the integrity and viability of the base.

**Senator MURPHY**—With regard to your master plan, I understood yesterday that you were saying that all the buildings in the area below the officers mess and down towards the airfield would ultimately be moved away. Is that correct?

**Group Capt. Lane**—In the longer term that is correct. What we have done in the development of the master plan is identify zones for particular activities and make sure there is compatibility within and between zones. The idea would be that we would make sure that the appropriate facilities are in the appropriate zone. The area that you are talking about is one which is the subject of high noise levels. It would also be used to provide first and secondary level support for aircraft parked on proposed future aprons. The facilities that are currently there would have to be relocated to a more appropriate zone in accordance with our master plan.

**Senator MURPHY**—Have you done any costings on the master plan?

**Group Capt. Lane**—Not at the moment.

**Senator MURPHY**—Is it a staged development?

**Group Capt. Lane**—Yes, it would be.

**Senator MURPHY**—Then you would cost that at a particular time?

**Group Capt. Lane**—Yes.

**Senator MURPHY**—So what is the next step for Amberley?

**Group Capt. Lane**—As I mentioned earlier, we are proposing to bring forward a base redevelopment proposal in the latter part of this year which we have estimated and have been advised would be about \$55.5 million. It would be some time before we will be able to get the trigger to be able to do the further redevelopment of the base. We envisage that that trigger will be around the time frame when we are looking at the replacement for

the F111 aircraft. So we are talking perhaps 2015—somewhere around that time.

**Mr HATTON**—It strikes me that the development of Amberley is a bit like life. During World War II there was a need to have a base, that went into place, the facility then grew a bit like topsy and has been added to on an ad hoc basis. Now we are at a point where, with the master plans being developed for all those airfields and bases, there is an ongoing redevelopment plan for the lot. Am I right in saying there are two lots of pressures here that have meant that 6 Squadron has not been able to have its priority change made?

One lot of pressures is the development of the other bases—the bare bases at Curtin and Scherger and the full development of Tindal and Darwin—and that, in terms of the RAAF's priorities, money has had to be spent there first in order to ensure that the forward capacity was met before you could turn back to look at a redevelopment of Amberley, and the squadron's better composition as a result. Does that interlink with the other set of pressures, that from 1990 on—and we are six to seven years up from that now—when it was determined that we would keep the F111s, nothing has been done in that period of time? Is it the linkage between those two problems?

**Group Capt. Lane**—I will take the first issue first. It is not really the RAAF's priority, it is the government's priority, and we have then had to abide by the government's policy that we would be developing our infrastructure in the north. Of course, we only have limited funds. So, from a departmental and then RAAF point of view, we have concentrated our development in the northern part of Australia.

In terms of the second issue, the finalising the studies on the F111, in reality the outcome of the report was only finalised last year. Quite a number of studies have been undertaken in the period from, say, 1990 until 1996, all of which were interrelated. It was only last year that the final link in the chain, if I can put it that way, was resolved and we were able to proceed with certainty on the development of the facilities to support the F111 force.

**Mr HATTON**—So, it looks as though it was a long period of time when the measures were not taken; but the studies had to be undertaken during that period of time before you could make a final determination. Given that the MacIntosh review is set to come down shortly and we do not know what is in it until it comes out, that could obviously impinge on the future of Amberley as a major base. What is the feeling with regard to the RAAF's input? It is obvious from all of the evidence that has been given that the redevelopment of this base on a stage basis is set in concrete, as far as the RAAF is concerned. Do you have any great fears that the results of that review may be to cause you to adjust things greatly?

**Group Capt. Lane**—I believe our master plan has the flexibility to be able to accommodate any set of circumstances that might come forward. We would have to wait

until the outcome of the defence efficiency review is known before we would be able to respond with any certainty to the issues you have raised.

**Mr HATTON**—In terms of the major redevelopment—

**CHAIR**—Could I interrupt at this point? We would not be here, I presume, if you were not optimistic that the defence force efficiency review was going to favour both the continuation of Amberley and, by implication, its redevelopment.

**Group Capt. Lane**—I am very optimistic. In fact, I think it is fair to say that perhaps the defence efficiency review per se may not have an impact on the base. There are likely to be other departmental studies that could have an impact, rather than the defence efficiency review.

**Senator FERGUSON**—Did you have any input into the efficiency review?

**Group Capt. Lane**—Personally? The RAAF obviously did, and our division has had an input into the defence efficiency review.

**Mr HATTON**—I am interested in the 20-15 trigger in terms of providing a major rejigging of facilities at this base and, essentially, dealing with those ad hoc problems that have built up over time. Do you think that trigger is there, with the replacement of the F111 and around that period of time? Do you see that as being necessary to justify the cost of that major program? It would seem to me that, with an ongoing stage development, you could still get triggers along the way. But is that necessary in terms of an interdepartmental fight over who gets the funds and what the priorities are, or in terms of being able to convince us and the department and the parliament?

**Group Capt. Lane**—I believe the trigger is really that we are looking at quite a significant redevelopment of the base. When you have a look at the master plan on the board, you will see that we are looking at quite a radical change. Obviously, not all of that will occur, but we are providing the flexibility and the framework for that to occur. For us to be able to undertake such a massive scope of work and such a radical reorganisation, we have to have some fairly significant activity. What we would be looking at, in terms of the replacement for the F111, would be to know what the future role of the base would be. It might be different from the way we are doing it now. We would then be able to use that event to make sure we could set up the base to cater for that new capability for the duration of that new capability, and that may be for another 25 or 30 years.

In terms of whether we could actually do some progressive upgrades along the way, another issue we would also look at is what we would commonly term a half-life upgrade of the existing buildings. Obviously, if we design a building that has a life of 50 years, somewhere during the life of that facility we would have to go back and do an extensive refurbishment. In essence, some of our upgrades reflect the half-life upgrades for

those particular facilities. There may be smaller redevelopments or smaller projects throughout that time, when we actually go through and refurbish the existing facilities.

**Senator FERGUSON**—You have stated your costs at \$10.25 million. Are you quite confident that that out-turn cost is realistic?

**Group Capt. Lane**—Yes, Senator. Of course, we are always subject to the tender box, but we are quite confident that the amount of funds that we have allocated will be sufficient to cater for the proposed scope of work.

**Senator FERGUSON**—What happens if you come in under budget? Is the money allowed to be spent here at Amberley, or does it go back into the bin?

**Group Capt. Lane**—It essentially goes back into the bin.

**Mr HOLLIS**—The public works committee gets a letter asking why.

**Senator FERGUSON**—What sort of disruption is the work going to cause to your base here?

**Group Capt. Lane**—That is a very good issue. No. 6 Squadron will have to continue to operate whilst these works are proceeding. We need to make sure that we undertake a work-around, so that there is no break in No. 6 Squadron operations. This will require us to provide some temporary facilities so that we can relocate staff currently working out of the existing flight line building and make sure that they are able to operate. Then we will decommission the existing flight line building and make the site available to the contractor. Similarly, we will have to make sure that we relocate the aircraft which are stored in hangar 373 and, in that regard, we would be looking at fixing up the Bellman hangars first, so that we can make the site available to the contractor. At the completion of the works, we also have to make sure that the staff are then relocated in the new facilities—once again, without any break in operations.

**Senator FERGUSON**—Do you see yourselves having to provide extra temporary facilities, or can you accommodate it all satisfactorily within the existing facilities?

**Group Capt. Lane**—We can accommodate it within the existing facilities, augmented by the provision of some other demountable facilities.

**Senator FERGUSON**—That is included in the costs?

**Group Capt. Lane**—That has been included in the costs. We are working through the program to ensure that that seamless transition occurs.

**Senator FERGUSON**—Do you think that, while there will be some disruption, it



will be minimal disruption and you can still function efficiently, without relocating anywhere else? You can relocate on the base, but without having to shift anywhere else.

**Group Capt. Lane**—Yes.

**Senator FERGUSON**—I think you said earlier that you have had discussions with the Ipswich City Council and various authorities around the place. Has the council, or anybody else, raised any objection or made any comments at all about the proposals that are before us today?

**Group Capt. Lane**—No.

**Senator FERGUSON**—In other words, they are totally 100 per cent behind you.

**Group Capt. Lane**—We have not received any objections.

**CHAIR**—Mr Forrest, I remind you that there are not many revetments in this project, but you are welcome to ask any questions.

**Mr FORREST**—I have a question about ordnance. My first question is to the group. In the summary statement, you have said that there are ‘no direct environmental implications resulting from the provision of proposed facilities.’ I am hoping you are able to tell us a little about the work you have done to enable you to make that statement.

**Group Capt. Lane**—As part of the master plan for RAAF Base Amberley, we have actually undertaken a review of the environmental issues, and we believe that there are no significant environmental issues which would be of any concern to the base. Obviously, we have interceptor pits that are on all of our drainage from the aircraft aprons so that, in the event of a fuel spill on the apron, any hydrocarbons or pollutants are trapped before they go off base into the stormwater drains that may drain into the local Warrell Creek or Bremer River. From that point of view, we have covered the significant environmental issues.

**Mr FORREST**—Is noise abatement part of that whole environmental consideration?

**Group Capt. Lane**—Yes. As I mentioned before, we have the 2006 ANEF, which reflects the numbers of aircraft movements, the different types of aircraft, the flight tracks. Obviously, aircraft that are operating out of this base have to depart and arrive on predetermined flight tracks. By doing that, we are able to contain the noise to the extent that we have identified in the 2006 ANEFs.

**Mr FORREST**—You are living on a live air base, as we have just had demonstrated to us. The aircraft are taking off in an operational sense, so does providing

this additional work make it any better or does it make it any worse in terms of their being more air time? What are the implications in terms of noise?

**Group Capt. Lane**—It will not help with the aircraft noise, because there will be no decrease in the number of movements. The significant benefit will be to the people, because we will be providing them with facilities that have been properly designed, with double glazing and the appropriate insulation in the walls and in the roof structures to overcome the noise that would intrude into the building because of the aircraft movements or operations.

**Mr FORREST**—The summary statement also says that no heritage implications are evident. Could you describe the work you have done to justify that statement?

**Group Capt. Lane**—For the master plan report, heritage was one of the issues that we asked our consultants to investigate. Their reports indicated that there are no buildings which are to be included on the Register of the National Estate. On that basis we have determined that there are no heritage issues for any of the assets that are here on the base.

**Mr FORREST**—Regarding the history of the site, I notice a preamble in your submission to the committee about the Aboriginal name of this site meaning ‘swampy place where flying squirrels are found’. I want to know if anybody has ever found a flying squirrel out here at Amberley. It will be the flying squirrel that will be significant for anybody who wants to complain!

**Group Capt. Lane**—I am not aware that anyone has ever found a flying squirrel.

**Mr FORREST**—You made some changes to your summary statement. I have lost my reference, but you have included a dot point on a structural upgrade to the Bellman hangars. I thought those hangars were in fairly good condition. Why would you need to include a structural upgrade?

**Group Capt. Lane**—What we are proposing in terms of the structural upgrade to the hangars is rather minimal. We are going to encase the footings of the columns of the Bellman hangars in concrete. It just provides a little bit of extra mass in the event of uplift forces.

**Mr FORREST**—That is a cyclonic consideration, is it?

**Group Capt. Lane**—It is not cyclonic per se. We have identified that we will put some additional concrete around the footings to just give the building itself a little bit of extra mass.

**CHAIR**—Could I just interject there for a moment. I understood also, from a comment that Group Captain Schmidt made yesterday, that we were installing some

additional fire protection services. Am I right? Were they the Bellman hangars?

**Group Capt. Lane**—We are not providing fire protection; we are providing fire detection, because the aircraft will be stored in there in a defuelled state.

**CHAIR**—I am sure that would be my mistake, not his. They are fire detection systems.

**Mr FORREST**—The supplementary evidence also included a revision of the total price for ongoing works. Is the price schedule, in the submission you put before the committee amended? I cannot find that either. The \$10.25 million estimate was detailed.

**Group Capt. Lane**—Yes, there was an estimate that was provided to the committee by the secretariat. That reflects outturn costs for this particular project of \$10.25 million.

**Mr FORREST**—My question was: are the additional dot points you have submitted this morning, in terms of cost, included in that estimate? That is further to Senator Ferguson's question.

**Group Capt. Lane**—Yes, they are.

**Mr FORREST**—I would like to cover my favourite question, about ordnance. I notice that there is no reference anywhere to the position of the way that ordnance is loaded here at Amberley, and I am wondering why that is not a priority. The focus of this first stage is for accommodation. Does that mean that the loading of ordnance, the arming of ordnance, is satisfactorily carried out here at Amberley?

**Group Capt. Lane**—We have the capability to undertake the loading of ordnance on the base, and we are using an area down into the south-eastern part of the base where we can actually arm up our aircraft with ordnance. As part of the base redevelopment proposal later on this year we will be providing an ordnance loading apron complex similar to the ones that you may have seen at Tindal or at Darwin, or that have been proposed for Darwin and Tindal, and that will provide us with purpose designed facilities for loading ordnance in a safe and efficient way.

**Mr FORREST**—It just surprises me that at an isolated location like Tindal, which is in the middle of nowhere, considerable trouble has been extended to provide safe ordnance loading, yet here, where you have got very close residential accommodation, it does not seem to have priority. Why is that?

**Group Capt. Lane**—Ordnance loading here at RAAF Amberley is also done in a very safe way, and it is done with due cognisance of all the necessary safeguarding distances that are required for the ordnance loading operations. We have not identified it

as part of this project because it is not directly related to the facilities that are required for the accommodation of 6 Squadron. But we do have dedicated ordnance loading aprons, or areas that are licensed as ordnance loading aprons, on the south-eastern part of the base.

**Mr FORREST**—So you are perfectly satisfied that there is no necessity to give some greater priority to ordnance loading areas?

**Group Capt. Lane**—We are giving it priority and it is being included as part of the base redevelopment works that are coming before the committee later this year.

**Mr FORREST**—I have one other question. Paragraph 21, which again is in the preamble, talks about the historic nature of the site and mentions that the changes at that time were not brought before the committee because of sensitivity. I am wondering what factors make up sensitivity and why it would not have been reported to what was then this committee.

**Group Capt. Lane**—It was the Vietnam War.

**Mr FORREST**—It was just top security because of wartime provision, and no other reason?

**Group Capt. Lane**—I believe that that is the case.

**Senator CALVERT**—Could I return to a question I raised earlier. We were talking about the hangars but I want to talk about the strip again. Group Captain Hamwood was saying that, if you used those large Galaxy aircraft to any great extent, it might damage some of the strip. Currently, you have told us, Amberley is used as a base and then you move everything forward to Curtin or Scherger or wherever it is going. Would it be fair to say that your largest transport aircraft at the moment are Hercules?

**Group Capt. Lane**—The 707, actually, is our largest transport aircraft.

**Senator CALVERT**—When we came in this morning we saw an eight-wheel drive fuel tanker that obviously belongs to the Marines. They brought it over in the back of that Galaxy. Do we have any plans to upgrade our transport facility so that we can move our gear from Amberley to Curtin quicker and more efficiently with larger transport aircraft. If that is the case, don't you need to think again about the strip here?

**Group Capt. Shepherd**—There are studies under way in Canberra to look at replacements to the Hercules—in fact, the project is funded. We are buying J model Hercules to replace E model Hercules. Further studies will determine the replacement for the H model Hercules. Most of the stuff you see from the marines was brought in by ship. Our concept of deployment to the north would see the vast majority of our equipment go up by line or road transport.

**Senator CALVERT**—So you do not see any need in the future for the air force to have larger transport planes than they have now?

**Group Capt. Shepherd**—The study under way in Canberra to look at either refurbishment or replacement of the H model Hercules will determine that.

**Senator CALVERT**—Just for argument sake, if the study shows that we have to get bigger transport aircraft, doesn't that mean that your master plan has to be rejigged to strengthen the runway, for a start?

**Group Capt. Lane**—There are ways of strengthening the runway. We have to look at the design aircraft and then take the appropriate measures to improve or enhance the strength of the runway—for example, by an overlay. We would also have to look at the layout of the pavement systems. For example, with the C5 Galaxy, we would have to look at the width of the taxiway strips and make sure that they are wide enough so that we do not cause FOD problems. There is also the implications on the lighting. All of those issues would be taken into consideration with the decision on the type of aircraft.

**CHAIR**—That is probably more related to base redevelopment than to the immediate project. We may well be back to some of these questions, Senator Calvert.

**Senator MURPHY**—In your master plan, do you have a contingency should Evans Head range be closed?

**Group Capt. Shepherd**—I am unaware of any. However, there is a team currently conducting a study at Headquarters ADF to look at base and range disposition. They came through the other week seeking information. Their findings are not yet known.

**Senator MURPHY**—If it was closed, what restrictions would it place on the operations here? Would it have any serious impact?

**Group Capt. Shepherd**—To correctly and efficiently train, we need to drop practice ordnance virtually on every sortie. So if Evans Head were to close, and I know of no pressure for it to close at this stage, we would need to take alternate procedures to undertake that training.

**Group Capt. Lane**—Can I follow up on a question that was asked by Mr Forrest. He asked why the operational works undertaken between 1969 and 1977 were not referred to the PWC. These works were exempt from PWC examination under the national security exemption provision. Perhaps the other thing is that we know that there are no flying squirrels here but there are plenty of flying pigs!

**Mr HOLLIS**—Has an energy audit of the work been carried out?

**Group Capt. Lane**—I do not believe that an energy audit has been carried out. But no doubt, as part of the detailed design development process, there will be consideration of the energy usage as part of that design process. Perhaps my colleague might be able to answer that.

**Mr Bicevskis**—That is absolutely correct. Being in the concept design stage, detailed energy studies have not been carried out. The full energy audit will be integral to the design process as we develop the design.

**Mr FORREST**—I have some questions about the estimate that has been provided to us commercial in confidence. I hope I am able to refer to that without talking about the figures.

**CHAIR**—The total figure is not so much a problem; it is the detailed breakdown.

**Mr FORREST**—There is a line item for project contingencies which is sizeable. How is that provided? Is it a percentage of an estimate or is there something that you are concerned about—the side, underground obstacles? Is there a reason that that sizeable figure is included in the estimate?

**Group Capt. Lane**—For any project of this type, we always take a contingency because we do not know what might be around. There might be latent conditions. For example, there might be a need to do additional remediation measures on soil or something like that or an underground service that we are not aware of. But we believe that the contingency that has been allocated to this project is appropriate for a project of this magnitude.

**Mr FORREST**—So there are no particular things, buried or unexploded ordnance or something like that? It is a sizeable figure, a bit more than what you would normally allocate for a contingency. It is a per cent figure on a total amount, including a whole lot of other obvious contingencies as well. It is quite a sizeable figure.

**Group Capt. Lane**—I can only reiterate that I believe that the percentage that has been allocated is an appropriate figure for a project of this size. Other things that could happen is that we could end up with tender variations. We are subject to the tender box. We do not know what the final price will be so we have to have a percentage available to cover variations or to cover contingencies.

**Mr FORREST**—There is an additional amount for indexation as well. How many contingencies do you need? It adds up to a sizeable figure.

**Group Capt. Lane**—The indexation amount is what we provide to cater for the out-turn costs. In fact, the 10.25 figure that has been identified for the project is a cost cap for this particular project.

**Senator CALVERT**—In your summary statement that you read to us this morning you say, as part of the need for new facilities, that full security screening of sensitive areas within the headquarters building cannot be achieved. That means at the moment, obviously. Have there been any security breaches? What sorts of perceived threats do you have as far as security is concerned?

**Group Capt. Shepherd**—As part of our daily operations, we handle information of a classified nature. The current facilities of 6 Squadron are secured by louvres, and a various range of outdated and quite inappropriate windows. We have put into place what security measures we can to make the current facilities secure. There have not been any great security breaches of a sensitive nature in recent memory but, of course, that is an important planning consideration in the design of a new building. As I said, a lot of our tactics, procedures, and specifications of our equipment are of a highly classified nature and need to be protected as such.

**Senator CALVERT**—Given the efficiency of cameras and things, as you showed us in the security film the other day, and given photos that have been on the front of the *Sunday Telegraph*, I suppose it is possible that someone will be around with a camera taking embarrassing photos and I guess that is one of the reasons you want to relocate.

**Group Capt. Shepherd**—That is true but it is not just photographic. A lot of the stuff that is secure is in documentation and that actually remains in secure rooms in classes of safes that are required by security processes. We also have a weathercock procedure in the service which is a security status that changes, through various colours, from benign to active, shall we say. In recent times, the weathercock system has been employed. For example, during the Gulf War this base was on a weathercock alert for quite a long period, as were all ADF bases. That adds to a physical security sense as well as the security for classified information.

**Senator CALVERT**—So as far as you are aware there have never been any breaches of security on this base?

**Group Capt. Shepherd**—On the odd occasion the odd window has been left open incorrectly. However, we do not rely on one level of security. Documentation of a classified nature is required to be locked up in the appropriate safes when it is not being used, even throughout the day, much less overnight. To my knowledge—and I have been here for a fair while—there has been no great security breach that would infringe the restrictive nature of the materiel supply.

**Senator CALVERT**—In the overall scheme of things, and from the point of view of the commanding officer, where does security fit? Is that one of the priorities?

**Group Capt. Shepherd**—Yes. We deal with some sensitive information. We are bound by regulations and restrictions to honour the information that has been given to us

by other countries and especially we are not to pass it onto third countries. It is a daily bread and butter issue that we just accommodate in our normal daily procedures, as is flying safety, as is maintenance practices. That goes to the make-up of running a flying unit.

**Group Capt. Lane**—I gathered from Mr Forrest that he was perhaps not satisfied with our treatise of the contingency. Perhaps I can just make three additional comments that go back to what I said before, that we believe that the level of contingency is appropriate at this stage of the preliminary design. I stress the word ‘preliminary’ because we have not yet done a detailed design.

Also, particularly as the project is cost-capped, and that brings out the issue of the 1.2 per cent indexation, we have an outturn cost of \$10.253 million, which is our cost-cap. After we have undertaken the detailed design and the tender price is known, the amount of contingency will be reviewed because we then do have firm figures and we can address more appropriately the issue of contingency at that stage. I hope that clarifies the point for you.

**CHAIR**—Group Captain Lane, you spend much of your professional life dealing with projects like this. I presume the 10 per cent, which is the contingency figure, is the figure that you would normally use on all projects at this stage?

**Group Capt. Lane**—It very much depends upon the type of project. If we were in an area where we knew, for example, that there were latent conditions or whatever, we may adopt a different contingency figure. However, we are talking here about a fairly well defined scope of work and we believe that at this stage the 10 per cent is the appropriate figure.

**CHAIR**—Any other questions? If there are no further questions it is proposed that the correspondence circulated to members 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—*



**Group Capt. Lane**—To sum up, I believe that what we have tried to demonstrate today is that there is a sound requirement for these particular facilities. It will overcome many of our occupational health and safety and noise issues. I believe that there is a strong requirement for the proposed facilities.

I would also wish to advise the committee that in accordance with our standard procedures the Department of Defence engaged a consultant to design the 6 Squadron facilities. The consultant has completed all the preliminary design work to support Defence's submission to this committee. Detailed design work is proposed to commence next week. I can assure the committee that Defence will not enter a contract with a construction contractor until parliamentary approval is obtained. I would just like to advise the committee of that.

**CHAIR**—Thank you Group Captain Lane, we will bear that in mind in our consideration of this works proposal at the next meeting of the committee.

Presuming there is nothing else that any other committee member wishes to raise, it is appropriate for me to close this hearing. However, before closing I would like to thank the witnesses who appeared before the committee today and those who assisted our inspections yesterday afternoon.

The fact that there has been so little controversy about this proposal is, I think, a reflection on the professionalism of the RAAF and of the neighbourly relations that it has managed to achieve with the people of Ipswich. I believe that the cooperation between the community of Ipswich and RAAF Base Amberley is commendable.

I run the risk, I suppose, of my committee members thinking that my identification with the RAAF runs deeper than the colour of my shirt, but I would just like to indicate how much I appreciate the briefing we had yesterday. It is always dangerous for civilians to draw parallels in civilian terms in the presence of military personnel because the parallels and the comparisons sometimes may not be as appropriate as the civilian thinks. I suspect that there is in the community at large—certainly on the committee and also, I imagine, among the people of Ipswich—a certain feeling of reassurance that the base is here. We all have our own top-gun view of life and like to think that there is someone around keeping an eye on what is going on and looking after us. So I commend RAAF Amberley and the RAAF for both the submission and the briefing yesterday which I found quite reassuring and very much to the credit of RAAF personnel.

I also thank my committee members who are here to assess this project, and Hansard and the PWC secretariat for their work.

Resolved (on motion by Mr Hollis):

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

**Committee adjourned at 11.01 a.m.**