



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

# JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON TREATIES

Reference: Agreement with Singapore to locate a RASF  
helicopter squadron at Oakey

TOOWOOMBA

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OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT

CANBERRA

JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON TREATIES

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For inquiry into and report on:

Agreement with Singapore to locate a RASF helicopter squadron at Oakey, Queensland.

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**CHAIRMAN**—Ladies and gentlemen, first of all, I apologise for a slightly late start, which was unavoidable. For those of who do not know, the Joint Standing Committee on Treaties comprises 16 members from all parties from both houses of the parliament in Canberra. We have four members here for this hearing—I suppose it is quality rather than quantity that counts. They are Dick Adams, who is a Labor Party member from Tasmania; Kerry Bartlett, who is a Liberal member from New South Wales; Warren Truss, a Queensland National Party member, and I am Bill Taylor, the local member in Toowoomba, for those of you who do not know, and also chairman of this committee.

The committee is a very important committee which was established for the first time by the present federal government to inquire into all treaties after the signature process before the final ratification. This committee has 15 sitting days after the tabling takes place in which to report to the parliament, after which the parliament will either ratify or not ratify.

Today we particularly welcome all of you to come along and talk to us about the so-called Oakey agreement—the agreement between the government of Australia and the Republic of Singapore in relation to the proposed stationing of a squadron of Republic of Singapore Air Force aircraft and personnel at the Oakey Aviation Centre.

I take the opportunity, before we formally open the public hearing, to thank all those who are appearing—members of federal departments, all officers of the Australian Defence Force and local councils. I particularly welcome Mayor Taylor from Jondaryan Shire, and I am sure Ross Miller will be here a little later in the morning. I thank local community organisations—we look forward to hearing what they have to say. Very importantly, and this is a point that I want to emphasise this morning, despite some of the negatives that appeared in the local press over the last couple of months from some people, we want to hear from individuals about their views on this issue. It is a public hearing; it is an avenue in which people can have their views heard on all the issues under our basic freedom of speech.

As I indicated over the last couple of months, these hearings are an important part of our democratic process and I think people today should take full opportunity to make their views known, both departmentally and individually, before any legally binding action is taken by the federal government. Whilst I have to say, both as the local member and as a general perception, that I think there is very broad community support for what is being proposed both in Oakey and Toowoomba, it is important, as I said before, for the functioning of this committee, and in the national interest, that we hear all views on this particular issue.

I understand there will be at least two or three individuals who will be giving evidence. For those members of the public who have not been involved in a public hearing before, as you have already seen, we have sworn or affirmed the departmental witnesses; the same will be done with individuals, whether they be representing organisations or representing themselves. People will be giving evidence under oath or under affirmation. It will be on the public record. I just mention that as a formality.

We have set aside time at the end of this hearing—depending on how we go with the departmental officials—for individuals. As I said before, I understand at least two or three people want to come and say their piece, and we welcome that, of course. But for those of you who are in the audience who may not have indicated formally that you want to appear before the committee, I would appreciate it if, over the next couple of hours at a convenient time, you could contact Lieutenant Colonel Craig Evans, who has been seconded to the

treaties committee for the whole of 1997 as a Chief of the General Staff's fellow. Craig would be available—or the secretary, Peter Stephens, who is on my right—to take your name and indicate that you want to formally appear before the committee.

**BIGGS, Mr Ian David Grainge, Executive Director, Treaties Secretariat, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Casey Building, John McEwen Crescent, Barton, Australian Capital Territory 0221**

**FISHER, Mr John Douglas, Executive Officer, Philippines/Malaysia/Singapore/Brunei Section, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Casey Building, John McEwen Crescent, Barton, Australian Capital Territory 0221**

**BROWN, Mr Stephen Paul Keating, Assistant Secretary, Legal Services Branch, Department of Defence, Canberra, Australian Capital Territory 2600**

**EDWARDS, Colonel Michael John, Director of Coordination, Corporate Support, Army, Army Headquarters, Russell Offices, Canberra, Australian Capital Territory 2600**

**MELLOR, Brigadier William Julian Andrew, Commander, Aviation Support Group, Department of Defence (Army), Army Aviation Centre, Oakey, Queensland 4401**

**CHAIRMAN**—Welcome. Before we open the hearing to questions from the committee could we please have opening statements from both departments? Will the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade start first with an opening statement?

**Mr Fisher**—I thought I would start with some general comments on the bilateral relationship with Singapore, and the Oakey agreement in the context of that relationship. The Oakey agreement is the latest initiative in Australia's close and longstanding cooperation with Singapore. The agreement needs to be seen in the overall context of our relations with Singapore and the whole south-east and east Asian regions.

The relationship with Singapore conveys vital strategic, commercial and political benefits to Australia. From a strategic point of view, the cooperation between defence forces is an important part of building a stable regional security environment. It helps maintain a predictable and benign regional security environment which Australia has benefited enormously from in the post-World War II years.

Singapore shares key Australian interests in a stable and predictable region. Singapore agrees with us on the need to build a strong and reliable web of defence and strategic contacts throughout the region as a means to build confidence, transparency and habits of cooperation on security issues. Singapore shares our view on the importance of the US presence in the region as a balancing power in the post-Cold War era.

Our links with Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines and other regional countries serve to help increase the goodwill between our government and defence forces and the professionalism of defence forces in the region. This, in itself, is a major beneficial

outcome of defence cooperation for Australia.

Additional security benefits for Australia from our strategic relationship with Singapore are: a heightened potential interoperability of the respective defence forces; provision of important insights into regional and Singaporean thinking about strategic issues; and general potential peace time spin-offs for Australia including increasing our capacities in search and rescue and anti-terrorism operations.

The Oakey agreement forms, in a very real sense, part of the connective tissue that gives substance and depth through our shared interests with Singapore and the region. Without this kind of ongoing and innovative joint security cooperation it would be hard to give practical meaning and a sense of purpose and direction to our shared strategic and defence interests.

I turn now to the bilateral interests that bear on the treaty. The defence and strategic relationship between Australia and Singapore also needs to be seen in a wider context. Singapore is our biggest trading and investment partner in ASEAN, and bilateral trade totalled A\$6.16 billion in 1995-96. We consistently run a trade surplus with Singapore. Total two-way investment amounted to A\$10.68 billion as at June 1995 and these are the most recent figures available on this measure. Overall, Singapore is the sixth largest market for Australian exports.

Investment continues to grow. Only last week we examined a proposed investment in Australia, by a Singapore concern, of over \$A120 million. People to people links and political ties are also extensive and of a very real quality. Our links with Singapore are also remarkable for their depth over time. For instance, Singapore's President Ong was educated in Australia, as were many members of the Singapore cabinet. Australia remains the most favoured destination for Singaporeans seeking to study abroad.

In the last few years our bilateral links have been elevated above their already highly productive levels by the announcement in early 1996 of a so-called new partnership between the two countries by then Prime Minister Keating and Prime Minister Goh, and by the early support for the new partnership by the coalition government. The new partnership ushered in the Singapore Australia Joint Ministerial Committee which held its inaugural meeting in Canberra in October last year.

The JMC meeting served to underline the strong shared interests between Australia and Singapore on regional and global issues, particularly on trade liberalisation and regional security. These commonalities of interests mean that Australia and Singapore often have joint or closely aligned objectives in regional fora. We have particularly close cooperation through APEC, the World Trade Organisation and the region's peak security body, the ASEAN Regional Forum. Both countries are developed middle powers and it is in our interests to encourage cooperation and to build alliances to advance our objectives in regional and international fora. We will continue to gain a great deal from our cooperation with Singapore in all these fora. In this sense, Australia and Singapore are natural partners.



Australia is far and away a net gainer from its relationship with Singapore, including in defence cooperation. We gain from trade, from investment, from people to people contacts, and cooperation in regional and multilateral fora. I will leave the issue of the benefits to communities in the vicinity of Singapore-leased defence training facilities in Australia to those more familiar with their detail, but these material benefits are not insubstantial.

Cooperation and coalition building towards furthering Australia's national interests is our main game in international relations for nations, especially in the post-Cold War era. The more intensely we cooperate with pro-active, engaged, like-minded countries in our region, such as Singapore, the more Australia stands to benefit, and the more prosperous and secure we will be as a nation.

**Col. Edwards**—Mr Chair and members of the committee, in these opening remarks I would like to provide a brief outline of the defence relationship with Singapore, the key elements of this agreement, and some of the benefits to Australia and the Defence Force which will flow from it.

Australia has had a close defence relationship with Singapore for at least 25 years through the Five Power Defence Arrangement which has included various navy, army and air force exercises in Malaysia, Singapore, New Zealand and Australia. In addition, there have been a number of bilateral exercises with Singapore which have been conducted over the years, both in Singapore and Australia. Singapore defence personnel have also trained at our officer training establishments, our technical institutions, staff colleges, the Joint Service Staff College and the Australian College of Defence and Strategic Studies in Canberra. This has resulted in many close personal relationships at all levels.

Singapore has a very professional defence organisation, with modern equipment and highly trained and motivated officers. But, because of the space limitations in Singapore due to its geography, they are keen to maintain a close working relationship with Defence, particularly concerning the use of Australian defence facilities and training areas.

There are a number of existing formal arrangements for the use of Australian defence facilities and training areas by Singapore. These include an agreement with the Royal Australian Air Force for the use of the Pearce air base in Western Australia for basic flying training. This agreement, which was signed in March 1993, includes the basing of up to 250 staff, student pilots, maintenance personnel, about 200 dependents and up to 30 aircraft. The Singapore Army currently has an agreement, signed in 1995, concerning the use of the Shoalwater Bay training area in central Queensland. This is for a period up to 45 days per year in the September-October period.

Last year they rotated about 4,100 personnel through the area with a maximum of about 1,500 in Shoalwater Bay at any one time. They store and maintain about 120 armoured and other vehicles at Rockhampton, under a commercial arrangement with British Aerospace Australia. This exercise has been warmly welcomed by the Rockhampton Council and has injected significant funds into the local community. In addition, the Singapore armed forces

flew in a cultural group last year which performed several times in the Rockhampton area and was very well received. The Republic of Singapore Air Force has an agreement for the use of remotely piloted vehicles in Shoalwater Bay, and that was signed in September 1995. That activity is conducted in conjunction with the exercise I just mentioned.

Looking now at the Oakey agreement in some detail, it is for the conduct of the Republic of Singapore Air Force helicopter flying training at Oakey until 31 December 2012. This period of 15 years may be renegotiated two years prior to the expiry of the agreement. Under this arrangement, Singapore will base 12 Super Puma helicopters at Oakey, with an option to include some Chinook helicopters later. It is expected that up to 250 military and an additional 250 dependants will be based in the Oakey-Toowoomba region. That figure is expected to decrease slightly after the first two years of operation.

This agreement has the status of a treaty and was signed in October last year by Minister McLachlan and Deputy Prime Minister Tan from Singapore. It is now proceeding through the parliamentary process and it is envisaged that formal notes will be exchanged on or about 1 April this year to formally bring the agreement into force.

The key elements of the agreement include the Australian Defence Force providing military support on the Oakey base, while infrastructure support for dependants, including housing, education and health, will be provided by local government, commercial firms and institutions in the Oakey-Toowoomba area. Flying activities are to be consistent with those undertaken by a helicopter squadron for the purpose of maintain flying skills and operational capabilities. All activities are to be in accordance with Australian law, the Australian Defence Force regulations and procedures, and include such issues as environmental management, occupational health and safety, noise abatement, flying safety and security.

Suitable land will be made available at the aviation centre on which dedicated Singapore armed forces facilities will be built. This is expected to cost in the vicinity of \$30 million to \$35 million and will be undertaken by Australian firms, with the project being directed by our defence facilities division.

Stringent guidelines have been imposed in relation to security aspects of the deployment. This includes unrestricted and unaccompanied Australian Defence Force access to the entire Singapore armed forces facility, at any time, for the purpose of validating security arrangements.

Commercial support arrangements have been put in place in order to ensure Australian companies benefit from the arrangement. At least \$5 million annually will be contracted out to Australian firms for the provision of support. Financial arrangements specify that Singapore will pay the full cost of goods, dedicated services and facilities provided by the Australian Defence Force. In addition, they will pay a pro rata share of the cost of shared facilities. A mechanism has been set in place for management of the agreement and settlement of disputes.

In addition to this agreement, a number of supporting implementing arrangements have

been signed by our Chief of the General Staff and the Chief of the Singapore Air Force. These include specific arrangements for flying operations, logistics, finance, commercial support and facilities. These documents, while being international arrangements, do not carry treaty level status and, as such, do not require Executive Council approval.

Benefits to Australia and the Australian Defence Force are as follows. We share common interests with Singapore in contributing to a stable and secure regional environment and in developing our respective self-reliant defence capabilities. The regional engagement advantages of the enhanced relationship and interaction is substantial. It is expected that, as the relationship at Oakey develops, there will be opportunities for the army in particular, to utilise Singapore armed forces spare helicopter capacity for exercise, particularly in the Queensland area. This would result in mutually beneficial training.

There will be significant Australian industry participation including: construction of the new facilities at the aviation centre at a cost of around \$35 million; the provision of commercial support services for aircraft maintenance at \$5 million annually; the requirements for contract and casual labour resulting from increased base activity; and benefit to the Oakey-Toowoomba community associated with the Singaporeans residing here.

The outlined timings for the arrangement are that we expect that design will commence in April this year, with construction commencing in about the December period, 1997; and we expect the construction to be completed in September 1998, with occupation soon after that covering the period October to December.

Regarding interim arrangements, the Singapore armed forces have sought approval for interim basing of up to six helicopters later this year, after their exercise at Shoalwater Bay training area. This proposal is currently under consideration but shortage of apron space, hangarage and office accommodation at Oakey has cast doubt as to its feasibility at this stage. It is expected that the aircraft deployed for the 1998 exercise at Shoalwater Bay would probably remain in Australia and be repositioned to Oakey prior to the deployment of personnel late next year.

These are some aspects of law. No new legislation is required to give effect to Australia's obligations under this agreement. The rights and obligations contained in the agreement fall within the scope of existing government policy. In accordance with chapter 2 of the constitution, the treaty making power is vested in the Crown and is exercised by the Governor-General in Council. The other major treaty level document concerning Singapore is a status of forces agreement, signed in 1988. It covers such issues as legal jurisdiction, customs and quarantine and reciprocal defence obligations. That document remains extant except where this agreement specifically qualifies particular aspects. That concludes my opening remarks.

**CHAIRMAN**—I suppose the first question relates to Australian Defence Force experience with the Singaporeans already, and that is at RAAF Pearce. What lessons have been learned, both in terms of the capital infrastructure and in terms of the community relationships, as a result of the Pearce exercise that perhaps can be applied in Oakey-Toowoomba?

**Col. Edwards**—I will ask Wing Commander Tooth to talk on the facilities aspects, then maybe we can go onto the relationship.

**Wing Cmdr Tooth**—Certainly when we first started off in the delivery of the Pearce project, there was a lot of mistrust of us—perhaps that is the best word—on their side. And over the delivery of the project, that has heightened to its present situation and there is now a high level of trust between the Singaporean side and our side. So purely from that aspect, they now have our full confidence in the delivery of the facilities. We have the same people from our side and the same people from the Singaporean side in delivering the Oakey facilities. So I can only speak purely from the facilities aspect rather than the operational aspects at Pearce.

**CHAIRMAN**—Having been to Pearce and seen the facility, and from something we discussed briefly yesterday, how confident are you that what is being proposed for Oakey, in terms of the aesthetics and the compatibility with the aviation centre, is going to occur?

**Wing Cmdr Tooth**—This will certainly be an important component in briefing the design consultants to make sure that they take into account the existing form of construction at Oakey, to make sure it is compatible both in materials used, colour schemes and anything else that would be applicable.

**CHAIRMAN**—As the aviation centre is developed, will the enhancement be consistent with what is being proposed for the Singaporeans?

**Brig. Mellor**—In terms of the Oakey master plan, this would be a consideration in the development of the Oakey plan and compatibility would be one of the design criteria.

**CHAIRMAN**—Again, from observation and some anecdotal information that was given to us when we were in Pearce a few years ago in relation to this community relationship, there were a few difficulties initially with groups. What are we doing and what have we learnt as a result of the Pearce exercise in bringing people like this into our community?

**Brig. Mellor**—We have gone to great lengths to ensure, in the negotiation process with Singapore, that the lessons that have been learnt from the negotiations, both over Shoalwater Bay and Pearce, have been taken into account. I personally visited Pearce last year soon after I took over my job at Oakey and discussed with people on the base there issues not only of them operating on the base but of the Singaporean contingent's integration into the domestic environment. In addition, there is a working group in Canberra which addresses these issues across both services.

Suffice to say, I am confident that where there have been some difficulties and they are acknowledged, particularly in the commercial support program as well, but also in some aspects of operating on the base and in their integration into the community, we are well aware of those and we are aware of the pitfalls. The Singapore Defence Force personnel that we have been negotiating with are all well aware of it as well and take great pains to make sure those sorts of

problems are not repeated in this area.

**Mr ADAMS**—That goes on to the amount of consultation that has taken place between yourselves and the local community. Could you outline some of that? Have you dealt with local councils and those sorts of things?

**Brig. Mellor**—Yes, we have dealt with both the Jondaryan Shire Council and the Toowoomba City Council and at state government level they have been kept well aware of the developments. The negotiations have been going on now, I think, for probably close to two years and at each stage we have been briefing appropriately and taking advice to ensure that people are aware of the development of the negotiations. It has obviously been a fairly long process.

**Mr ADAMS**—There is night flying now by your own squadron and I take it that the Singaporeans will night fly as well in their training operations and everything else. Will that affect the local community? Will there be more night flying? Is it going to affect the local community?

**Brig. Mellor**—There will undoubtedly be more night flying but we take great pains to ensure that what night flying we do has the minimum impact and, as the agreement indicates that the Singaporeans have to comply with our regulations and procedures, we will ensure that their night flying creates the minimum impact as well.

**Mr ADAMS**—The agreement will be interchanging between training. Is there any formal opportunity for our forces and the Singaporeans, in the future, to exchange ideas? Is there a formal structure being put in place to allow that to happen?

**Brig. Mellor**—Specifically related to this agreement there are no formal exchange positions, but the mere proximity of them on the base and the use of common facilities such as the officers' and sergeants' messes and the flying safety forums that we have out there means that there will automatically be an exchange of information. There will also be, if Pearce is any indication, a good deal of informal exchange: both of interaction of personnel, so our personnel will go and fly as co-pilots on the odd occasion in their aircraft and vice versa; and similarly in terms of the maintenance personnel.

**Mr ADAMS**—We are quite happy with their competence, are we, from our experience at Pearce?

**Brig. Mellor**—Yes, quite happy.

**Mr BARTLETT**—You mentioned a capital injection of \$30 million to \$35 million. What sort of estimates have you made of recurrent contribution to the local economy?

**Brig. Mellor**—I personally am not aware of an estimate in terms of recurrent injection. I am not familiar with what the Singapore salary structure is, nor particularly with their consumption arrangements.

**Mr BARTLETT**—What about at Pearce, for example? Has there been a significant addition to the local economy as a result of the operations there?

**Brig. Mellor**—There has been. I do not know the quantum of that, but bear in mind there are a group of about 400 there in a population of nearly a million. What we are talking about here is a group of 500 in a population of—

**Mr BARTLETT**—A significant influence.

**Brig. Mellor**—It will be a more significant impact.

**Mr BARTLETT**—Has there been note taken of any costs that might accrue to the local economy—perhaps particular needs for infrastructure or other services that do not have to be provided at the moment that council might have to contribute to, for instance?

**Brig. Mellor**—I am not sure that we have identified any that are not provided at the moment, but we have indicated where we expect there to be increased amounts of services and/or goods provided in the terms of, say, power, water and fuel usage and that like.

**CHAIRMAN**—Just one point I think it is worth having on the record. Would it be reasonable to say, without getting into the specifics of the quantum of the economic multiplier, that that multiplier would be many millions of dollars per annum?

**Brig. Mellor**—I am not an expert on local economies, unfortunately, but if I were to give an equation or an equivalency then it would be the equivalent of increasing the army aviation centre by 500 people, which would obviously have a fairly marked impact.

**Mr BARTLETT**—And you do not see any unique costs arising out of this that would not happen if it were just an increase in the army activities there?

**Brig. Mellor**—I cannot think of any particularly. They will live in the local community, they will travel to and from work and they will, in the main, operate here 12 months a year.

**Mr BARTLETT**—So, while we cannot put a figure on it, you are confident that overall there would be significant net benefits?

**Brig. Mellor**—Very confident.

**Mr TRUSS**—I have got a number of questions that follow on from that line. I notice that there are no actual exchanges of cash associated with the agreement. How in practice will the Singaporeans pay for the services provided in this country? In particular I am referring to the social services provided: the children attending schools, those who need to be admitted to hospital. How will they be charged for those services?

**Brig. Mellor**—I am not familiar with the education arrangements. I would imagine that they would be the same as any resident in the local community, that is, that they would have access to public education and they would be at liberty to attend private education at cost.

**Mr TRUSS**—And if they go to a public hospital in Toowoomba or Oakey?

**Brig. Mellor**—One assumes that that would be a similar arrangement. Again, I am not entirely sure of this, but I will check for you, that it would be the same as any non-Australian resident in the area.

**Mr TRUSS**—So the Singaporeans are making no contribution at all towards the provision of school places, hospital beds and other such services in the local community?

**Brig. Mellor**—Not to my knowledge.

**Mr Brown**—The agreement does provide that they should bear the full cost of medical and hospital treatment which they incur for their personnel in Australia.

**Mr TRUSS**—Does that mean that we will be charging them when they attend a free hospital in Queensland?

**Mr Brown**—Yes, that is my understanding.

**Mr TRUSS**—So they will be treated differently from other Australian citizens?

**Mr Brown**—As Brigadier Mellor has said, they would be in the same position as any other non-Australian resident in the community; they would have to pay the full cost of the services that are provided to them.

**Mr TRUSS**—Including the cost of providing education for any of their children who attend a school here?

**Mr Brown**—I cannot comment on the education aspect of it. As Brigadier Mellor said, we would have to pursue that and provide you with further information.

**CHAIRMAN**—There are a number of questions that you are going have to take on notice and get back to us quickly on. We need something to give a feel for the economic multiplier. My understanding is that they will be given a personal allowance under Singapore air force arrangements and if they have to pay if they go to a private school, then they pay, et cetera. What those specifics are I do not know. If we could have a thumbnail sketch of that whole area, we would have it on the public record and will be able to look at it in terms of our reporting to the parliament.

**Mr TRUSS**—I have more questions in that general field and I am really surprised that

they have not been addressed in the context of coming to this kind of agreement. There could be considerable costs on the state of Queensland which is providing those services if there is no provision in the agreement. That also applies to infrastructure costs in the community, as to whether there are any proposals to make contributions to the Jondaryan Shire or the Toowoomba City Council for sports facilities or other community facilities that are being used by the Singaporeans.

**Brig. Mellor**—I am aware that the state government has been consulted in the drafting of the agreement. In terms of education, the state government is well aware of the impending requirement. I am also aware that the Singaporean defence force negotiators have held discussions with local councils. I am not aware of the detail of those discussions, in terms of whether they addressed infrastructure and so on.

**Mr TRUSS**—On the same subject, perhaps you could also provide us with some information on the actual salary levels that will be paid to the Singaporeans, so that we can have an assurance that they will be able to live in Australia on the salary levels that are being paid, without having to call on Australian social services.

**Brig. Mellor**—Whilst I do not know the detail of the Singapore defence salary arrangements, I can assure you that they will have little difficulty living on them in Australia.

**CHAIRMAN**—They will be very substantial.

**Brig. Mellor**—I would be quite happy to be receiving them myself.

**CHAIRMAN**—That sort of information we can get from the High Commission anyhow, but it would be fair to say that their salary structure is very substantial. Ian Biggs, in terms of the Standing Committee on Treaties and state government departments, has some of this stuff been discussed with Queensland, specifically in relation to the infrastructure issues that Mr Truss has raised?

**Mr Biggs**—Not through the Standing Committee on Treaties. We provide routine information on treaties that are under consideration, including this one, and invite expressions of concern. In this case, the only expressions we had were of full support from the Queensland government.

**CHAIRMAN**—And, within the secretariat, we have not had a submission from the Premier's Department, for example. The secretary advises me that we have not. What we had better do, if my colleagues agree, is to write to the Premier's Department as a result of this hearing, point out that there could be substantial drawing down on some of the facilities and ask if they have any comments to make in relation to that. We should at least give them the opportunity to make some comments—and for local members to do so as well. We have a short comment here from the state member for Toowoomba North but it is a very general comment. Perhaps we should get the Premier's Department to pull it all together and give us something as a consolidated document.



**Mr TRUSS**—I think it is reasonable for us to know at a national level what the infrastructure costs are of an agreement of this nature. That does not mean necessarily that we would not wish to proceed with it, but at least Australia would be conscious of the hidden costs, if there are any, of an agreement of this nature.

**Mr BARTLETT**—I would just like to return for a moment to the question of education. Have we got any indication at Pearce as to roughly what percentage of students went to public schools vis-a-vis non-government schools?

**Brig. Mellor**—I do not have that at hand but we could get that information.

**CHAIRMAN**—It is worth making the point at this stage that we cannot draw too many analogies from Pearce because the jet pilots there are of a different age group, a different family mix, than what you are likely to have at Oakey. At Oakey, from my discussions informally with the Singaporean defence attache in Canberra, they could be quite mature people with, in some cases, grown up families, whereas Pearce was the young jet jockey, to put it colloquially. While we can draw some analogies, we have got to be careful that we do not draw too much from Pearce because I think they are going to be a different demographic group, really, are they not?

**Mr ADAMS**—Mr Chairman, if we are going to look at the possible infrastructure, et cetera, we had better make sure we do an analysis of the actual incoming economic gains as well, because there is going to be a substantial amount of incoming economic gain to this community. Most of us know the income levels will most probably be superior to some of ours, so there will be a substantial amount of income being spent in the local community.

**CHAIRMAN**—One issue in terms of the infrastructure is very topical. I welcome specifically Mayor Miller who has just walked in and I am sure that both Ross Miller and Peter Taylor, the Chairman of Jondaryan Shire, will have something to say when we hear from them about infrastructure, about water in particular. We are going to hear from Jondaryan Shire and Toowoomba City Council, but what specifically is the Department of Defence doing in relation to the water problem which was a very extensive problem during the drought a couple of years ago?

**Brig. Mellor**—The Department of Defence is contributing to the public works that the Jondaryan Shire Council is sponsoring to bring Toowoomba town water to Oakey.

**CHAIRMAN**—What is the time scale for that?

**Brig. Mellor**—I am not sure. Could I ask that that particular question be addressed to Mr Taylor?

**CHAIRMAN**—We will ask him later, but I think it is important that it gels with this proposal, bearing in mind that you are going to have substantial people on base by the end of next year.

**Mr ADAMS**—I take it that rescue/fire fighting situations will be upgraded at the base because there will be an increase in activity, or is it substantial enough now to cope with that?

**Brig. Mellor**—The various services on the base are all being assessed as to their capacity to handle the additional load. Where that capacity is already met and there has to be additional capacity, then that will be at the expense of the Singaporeans.

**Mr ADAMS**—What about dealing with the local emergency groups in the vicinity? Have you discussed with them that there will be an increase in activity coming from the base?

**Brig. Mellor**—I am sorry, I am not sure I understand the question.

**Mr ADAMS**—I thought that, if something happens off the base, one of the local groups may be involved and be first to the scene to an accident or something like that. Do you discuss those things with the local fire people or something like that?

**Brig. Mellor**—Are you talking about an accident to a Singapore aircraft?

**Mr ADAMS**—Yes.

**Brig. Mellor**—If there is an accident to a Singapore aircraft then the response will initially come from the Army Aviation Centre Accident Response Service, which will be manned on a pro rata basis by the Singaporeans and ourselves. If the Singaporeans are flying alone and they happen to have a night flying night by themselves then they will be entirely responsible for providing the accident response service in accordance with our regulations and procedures. If it is just normal flying during the day then it will be on a pro rata basis organised according to a schedule.

**Mr BARTLETT**—My understanding is that the Army Aviation Centre already has two units conducting flying operations at Oakey. Will the stationing of the Singaporean squadron affect our ability to conduct those operations?

**Brig. Mellor**—No.

**Mr BARTLETT**—Will there be no adverse impact at all?

**Brig. Mellor**—No.

**Mr BARTLETT**—Will there be any cost in terms of air traffic control of those facilities that the army will need?

**Brig. Mellor**—Again, if we require additional air traffic controllers, we are currently looking at whether the Singaporeans will provide an air traffic controller themselves. But if there is a requirement for additional air traffic controllers it may well be provided by Australia

but it will be at Singapore's expense.

**Mr TRUSS**—You may need to take this question on notice. What will be the visa entry arrangements applying to the Singaporeans coming into the country?

**Mr Brown**—That is one of the aspects covered by the existing status of forces agreement, which would continue to operate in parallel with the Oakey agreement. The general issues relating to the entry and presence of Singapore personnel in Australia will be covered by the status of forces agreement, as far as entry is concerned.

**CHAIRMAN**—The agreement specifies, doesn't it, that no one person can be here for more than three years?

**Mr Brown**—Yes.

**CHAIRMAN**—That is one way of controlling it, I suppose, although there may be some exceptions to that rule. That is what the agreement says, doesn't it?

**Col. Edwards**—The agreement says three years.

**Mr TRUSS**—They would be coming in on a one-year visa, and in which category. Therefore, will they be counted against the quotas that have been imposed in relation to various immigration categories?

**Mr Brown**—No, they are not covered by any particular immigration category. The general provision is that they only require personal identity cards or movement orders issued by the Singapore authorities. So they are not within the normal framework of immigration control, they are a special category and they will not be given entry visas at all. There is provision in Australian migration legislation to allow the entry of foreign military personnel and their dependants, when they come in, pursuant to status of forces agreements. That is true not only of the arrangements with Singapore but also of the arrangements we have with a number of other countries as well.

**Mr TRUSS**—What then is the procedure if a Singaporean soldier, while in Australia, decides to marry an Australian citizen or after their time here decide they like it in the country and want to stay?

**Mr Brown**—I cannot answer that question myself. I would have to take that on notice. We can find that out for you.

**CHAIRMAN**—Yes, you can take that one on notice.

**Mr TRUSS**—Regarding the future of the Oakey aviation base, perhaps Brigadier Mellor might be able to respond as to whether you have concerns about development proposals for areas within the training area, and in particular the possibilities of power stations

and the like, whether you have expressed those concerns, and will they have any bearing on this agreement?

**Brig. Mellor**—No, they have no bearing on this agreement. We do have concerns but they are quite separate to this agreement.

**Mr TRUSS**—So if power stations were to be built within your training area, it would not affect this particular agreement?

**Brig. Mellor**—It would affect operations at the base, which would have a flow-on effect to the operations of the Singaporeans on the base. From that point of view, yes, there would be an effect, but, whether this agreement was in effect or not, we would have to examine the development proposals as they affect our own operations on the base at the moment.

**Mr TRUSS**—Are the Singaporeans aware of such proposals?

**Brig. Mellor**—Well, as they have been in the public press, I imagine that the Singaporean High Commission is aware of them. Whether the individuals in Singapore are, I cannot say.

**Mr TRUSS**—And they are confident that you will be able to adequately address those issues?

**Brig. Mellor**—They will operate on the base to our regulations and with our procedures. So that is really our responsibility, and it is in our interests to ensure that those regulations and procedures are best for us, and therefore that will follow on that they will operate along the same lines.

**CHAIRMAN**—I do not think we want to digress too much from—I understand the situation, the local background in terms of the proposed power stations, but Brigadier Mellor, for the public record, would it be fair to say that you as the senior officer and your staff have an underlying duty of care, whether it be in terms of your pilots or in terms of the Singaporeans, in terms of some of those developments? That is an issue that you have to look at, isn't it?

**Brig. Mellor**—I have a duty of care to Australian pilots; I do not have that duty of care to the Singaporeans. They have a responsibility to operate to our regulations but the duty of care resides with their command structure.

**CHAIRMAN**—But it flows from your duty of care?

**Brig. Mellor**—Indeed.

**CHAIRMAN**—Can I just come back to the housing. We are going to hear from the

REIQ in a moment about housing stock. What concerns me a little, from what I have read and what I have seen so far, is that it is a sort of a laissez-faire arrangement. Is somebody within the Department of Defence, and I know the Defence Housing Authority and John Ferguson is in the audience but is not at this stage involved, but is somebody going to manage the stock or are they just going to be thrown onto the market? I am sure Mr Davis will have something to say about the market in a moment. Is somebody going to manage it from a departmental point of view?

**Col. Edwards**—The agreement is such at the moment that the Singaporeans will negotiate direct with the civil community on areas such as education, housing, medical and dental. There have been a number of teams that have come out from Singapore looking at this and, as we have already discussed, have been negotiating with both state and local government instrumentalities. The outcome of that we have not been party to in any detail. As we have already mentioned, we will endeavour to get that information from both local government and the Singapore authorities in Canberra.

**CHAIRMAN**—I think it is important, and I am sure Mayor Taylor will have something to say about this in a moment, that the Oakey-Toowoomba balance be struck. I do not know how that is done in a free market situation, people will find their own levels, but it seems to me that Toowoomba has a lot more to gain from this than perhaps Oakey. That is a shame and I am not sure how it would be solved, other than Oakey having a lot more facilities in the immediate area. But perhaps we will cover that when Mayor Taylor comes up and Mr Davis comes up with the REIQ. It is a basic problem at this point, as I see it, if it is left just to run. Maybe when we hear from Mr Davis in relation to his assessment of stocks in the area we will be a little better informed.

**Brig. Mellor**—If I could just say that the agreement does allow the Singaporeans to decide, of their own choice, where to reside.

**CHAIRMAN**—Yes, and it is fair also on the record to perhaps say that those who are accompanied will be going out into the community to get their accommodation. The unaccompanied, or the single people, will also be accommodated in private houses—I think the agreement specifies three to a house.

**Brig. Mellor**—I am not sure.

**Mr ADAMS**—How will this agreement have an effect on our multilateral or bilateral relations with other Asia-Pacific nations?

**Mr Fisher**—It will have a good effect in the region generally because it will help our regional security arrangements. It will help Singapore develop its capacities for defence and so it will create a more stable environment in a small way. Obviously for the Singaporean defence forces this is not their only training arrangement and is not their biggest, but it will assist in that way. I do not think any of our regional security partners would have any objections or any problems with us entering into such an arrangement.

**Mr TRUSS**—Putting aside the benefits to the community, could you identify what the military benefits of this agreement might be to Australia?

**Brig. Mellor**—The military benefits are both strategic and operational, which have been addressed in the opening statements by both the Department of Foreign Affairs and the Department of Defence. In addition to that are the more informal benefits that I have already raised in terms of the exchange of ideas and information, the building of personal relationships and aspects of interoperability between the Singaporeans and ourselves.

**Mr TRUSS**—So the defence department is enthusiastic about these sorts of arrangements?

**Brig. Mellor**—Yes.

**Mr TRUSS**—And you would see there to be potential for similar agreements with perhaps other defence forces around the world?

**Brig. Mellor**—That is probably a question for the Department of Foreign Affairs rather than ourselves.

**Mr Fisher**—I think Singapore is a special case. It has problems with its air space, and that is why it is taking up this opportunity, or may be taking up this opportunity. I do not necessarily think other countries would wish to avail themselves of similar sorts of opportunities.

**Mr TRUSS**—That was not so much my question. I was looking at it from a defence point of view, whether from a military point of view you would like to see similar arrangements with other countries.

**Brig. Mellor**—We currently have exchanges with other countries and we do a lot of training with other countries. I am not sure that there would be a need for other countries to be based here permanently in the same sort of style.

**CHAIRMAN**—What other countries are trained on base at the Army Aviation Centre?

**Brig. Mellor**—We have had over the years students from Papua New Guinea, Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, the United States and the United Kingdom. That is off the top of my head; there may have been others.

**CHAIRMAN**—With the transfer of the Nomads to Indonesia, will the aviation centre continue to do the maintenance training at the aviation centre ad infinitum, or what will happen there?

**Brig. Mellor**—For the Indonesians?

**CHAIRMAN**—Yes.

**Brig. Mellor**—That would be assessed on a requirement basis but there is certainly the ability for us to do that. I would foresee for some years to come, but not too many because our expertise on Nomad, of course, is waning and we would no longer have the training aids and/or the expertise to train.

**CHAIRMAN**—But that will continue for some years.

**Brig. Mellor**—I would see it continuing for a couple of years, yes.

**Col. Edwards**—We are continuing that support in Indonesia, at least up until the end of next year at this stage.

**Mr BARTLETT**—I was going to ask about the anticipated timetable both in terms of construction of facilities, arrival of Singaporean personnel and commencement of flying operations.

**Col. Edwards**—At this stage the Singaporeans are very keen to move in as soon as possible. They do fly out about six aircraft each year—large transport aircraft—at significant cost, normally to Amberley, and then fly them up to Shoalwater Bay, so they are keen to minimise the transport costs. And that is why we have this request for an interim basing, or at least interim storage; we are still yet to confirm. But the paucity of facilities at Oakey at this stage is a problem. And, while there might be some scope to straight store a number of aircraft in the best case at the moment, I would see they probably would not take up that opportunity for reasons that they would not like to see the aircraft just sitting around for 12 months without being used.

So we would expect for next year's exercise when they fly the aircraft out that they will remain in country, and then they will transport them down from Shoalwater Bay at the conclusion of the exercise, and that will fit in nicely with the time frame.

**Mr BARTLETT**—How long would it actually take to construct the facilities?

**Col. Edwards**—I would ask Wing Commander Tooth to speak about that. He will be the project director for this particular activity. He can go through the details.

**Wing Cmdr Tooth**—Mr Chairman, it is fairly early days yet. We have only recently engaged our project manager, and the time frame for delivering the facilities has yet to be refined. We are currently looking at letting construction contracts in December this year, with completion around September of next year.

**CHAIRMAN**—In terms of the capital infrastructure, to what extent are local firms

going to be given an opportunity to become involved in what is a very substantial amount of money?

**Wing Cmdr Tooth**—We are delivering these through the traditional contract method, engaging a project manager, design consultants and contractors. Obviously, most of the money will be in the contracting field. We are yet to go out for expressions of interest in that area. It is going to be very competitive. However, I would see that there would certainly, in the area of subcontractors, be a substantial input.

**CHAIRMAN**—What proactively—and Don Christmas of QCCI might have something to say on this too—are you going to do as a project manager to involve the input from local firms in a subcontractual or contractual way?

**Wing Cmdr Tooth**—It really comes down to the contractor that we engage through the competitive market, and the resources that he has. I would see that he would be looking on the resources available in this local area to provide a contribution to it. But we cannot actually stipulate to him that he has to have a certain percentage of local contact. But obviously it would be financially beneficial to him to use local subcontractors rather than to engage people from, say, Brisbane.

**CHAIRMAN**—You can understand at times local people being a little cynical when some of these things do not come to local companies, many of whom feel justifiably that they could handle it. I guess it is supply and demand, it is a competitive field, but I think it is something that is important for this area, and I would hope, as the local member, quite apart from the chairman of this committee, that in fact we could do something a little more proactive to involve local people in the bidding process.

**Mr TRUSS**—Are any of the short-listed project managers local?

**Wing Cmdr Tooth**—We have already engaged a project manager, Brisbane based. However, he does have on staff a Toowoomba based subconsultant to assist him in delivering the facilities.

**CHAIRMAN**—Thank you very much, and we will recall you in due course.



[10.15 a.m.]

**CHRISTMAS, Mr Donald Stanley, Regional Manager, South West Queensland, Queensland Chamber of Commerce and Industry and Toowoomba Chamber of Commerce, 566 Ruthven Street, Toowoomba, Queensland 4350**

**DAVIS, Mr Stephen, President, Darling Downs Branch, REIQ, PO Box 901, Toowoomba, Queensland 4350**

**MILLER, Mr Ross Cedric, Mayor, Toowoomba City Council, Herrils Street, Toowoomba, Queensland 4350**

**CHAIRMAN**—Welcome. Do any of you have any comments to make?

**Mr Taylor**—I am also the present chair of EDROC, which is a regional council.

**CHAIRMAN**—Thank you. Could we open with some short statements from each of the four of you. I ask the Mayor of Toowoomba to begin with a short statement.

**Mr Miller**—Thank you, Mr Chairman. On behalf of the Toowoomba community we are very supportive of this particular venture. We see it purely in dollar terms I suppose, but more importantly we see it as a very major economic boost to this city. In these economic times we believe that anything that is going to help our city we are fully supportive of. I would have to say that that really relates to the region, which you will hear about from Peter.

We see ourselves as the key regional centre of this region and we work hand in glove with our sister shires in that region. As I say, from our point of view we believe it is a major boost to us. We want to see this go ahead and we will be supportive all the way through it.

**Mr Taylor**—Overall, I see it from my regional chairman's point of view very similarly to the Mayor of Toowoomba. We have been fairly proactive in supporting proposals like this, along with a lot of other proposals, to see other developments come to our region. Certainly cooperatively we have been working on a major issue—one of water supply for our area. There have been some significant problems, particularly with my local shire area. We presently have a working party working on that. Agreements have been reached and Defence have been involved. I can go into more detail on that later. But, generally, regionally we are supportive. Locally, with my own council, there are some issues I would like to raise with you.

**Mr Christmas**—It is an exciting development for this area. As far as the Queensland Chamber of Commerce and Industry is concerned, we represent the interests of the business community and, from their perspective, obviously it presents many opportunities. There are some issues that I would like to raise aside from that of the business community, including the provision of health and education facilities to the group. Generally speaking, we are very

supportive. Provided that it is structured well and planned well, I see only benefits to the community.

**Mr Davis**—From the REIQ point of view, it will have a very positive effect on our industry, particularly the building area, if it is to be a long-term arrangement. If it is to be a short-term arrangement it will have a mixed effect.

**CHAIRMAN**—We will come back to you in a moment on some of the specifics. Can I just open the batting with Peter Taylor. For the benefit of the record, can you outline the water problem and what is being done to correct it?

**Mr Taylor**—If I could just give an overview. The present situation is that the Army Aviation Centre run their own reticulated water supply scheme separate to the shire one. Our own shire scheme has had significant problems, along with the army one. We are dependent on shallow water, a bore and an alluvium system. Water has been decreasing through the droughts. Even in the better years it is not recharging. It is poor quality water. Even the deeper water that has been sought by abattoirs and other industries in our region has given some problems.

To address that there is a working group working on that and agreements have been reached. A water pipeline is now planned for construction and land easements and acquisitions are presently being done. The design is almost to the calling of tender stage. The water pipeline is due for completion in 1997. The technical arrangement then will be that the Army Aviation Centre will be a consumer, like any other large consumer in our shire. We will supply them with water to the aviation centre boundary and they will reticulate within their own area.

There will be one water supply area with a pipeline going from Toowoomba to Oakey. We will close down most of our bores, but will keep enough of them on stand-by in case there is a problem with the water pipeline or some other problem. There will be a stand-by capacity. We will be operating on fully treated dam water which is of a much superior quality than the existing bore water we are using at the moment. Bore water is very poor quality and causes a great deal of problems.

The financial arrangements are not absolutely finalised. We have no disagreement with the Department of Defence. We have been working cooperatively with them and the Toowoomba City Council at various exchanges and meetings. It was of great concern to us initially that there were no other options but to build a pipeline. My consumers—not just the army but domestic consumers in my shire—were going to be bearing a very high cost for water to their own residences. Due to negotiations with Toowoomba City Council and the Department of Defence, I am pleased to report to you that we expect the final costs to our residences—the final agreement from Canberra is still waiting—to be at an affordable price now. That is going to be good news.

We are also building in some spare industry capacity in the pipeline so that it will allow for further industry expansion not only at the Army Aviation Centre but also at the industry at

Oakey. A significant new industry area to the western side of the city will be serviced by the new pipeline at the same stage. I think we have most things covered. We are just waiting on the final Department of Defence agreement to the resolution that has already been reached on the financial arrangements.

**CHAIRMAN**—I have one more question for you on the Oakey township. What is the Jondaryan Shire Council doing in conjunction with private enterprise in the township area to make Oakey more attractive, particularly in housing for Singaporeans specifically?

**Mr Taylor**—There are other things I would like to say on housing but I will get off the track too much if I say them. We have some concerns with housing in particular. The Army Aviation Centre is a large infrastructure base at the moment. Seventy per cent plus of the people live external to the base; most of them live in Toowoomba. We obviously would like to see more of them living in the local town and surrounding area.

The local people put up with noise, traffic, dust and other issues. On the non-payment of rates, as my ex-colleague in local government would know, the federal area does not pay any rates and there are costs incurred in the local economy. We believe, as an offset to that, that local housing should be a higher priority than it has been in the past.

While I have the opportunity, I will again tell the committee that we are opposed to transport subsidies being paid to people who travel from one centre to another. The Mayor of Toowoomba said that Toowoomba and the shires get on very well. We have very good arrangements with the city. We do not believe there is any justification in paying people daily subsidies to travel from one area to another to live.

**CHAIRMAN**—Peter, you would have disappointed me had you not put that on the public record this morning.

**Mr Taylor**—I am sorry I did not answer the question on what we are doing. I will come back to that if you like.

**CHAIRMAN**—We will come back to that. I just want to touch on the issue of race relations in Toowoomba. What is the situation in Toowoomba? What would you expect to happen as a result of the Singaporean air force people coming? Do you see no impact? What is your gut feeling on the ability of the city to cope with what is being proposed?

**Mr Miller**—I would have to say that the city would be very happy to have the Singaporeans in town. We are seeing criticisms going through the media at present. When the announcement was made, I had about two phone calls from the community about any concerns. I would think that they are minimal. We have a fairly diverse population here now through the university with our international students. We certainly have a fair percentage of Singaporeans in our community right now. Those people are very well accepted in the city. I believe Australians have a great rapport with Singaporeans. A lot of people have been to Singapore, so I think we have a bit of a different feel about that country. As I say, from my

gut feeling, I do not believe that there are any concerns there.

**CHAIRMAN**—Colleagues, we will ask questions of Mayor Miller first, because he has to leave—something specifically on Toowoomba.

**Mr ADAMS**—Mayor Miller, you like the dollars coming in; you like the economics of this structure. What are you going to do as a community for the Singaporeans? Are you going to integrate these people into the community?

**Mr Miller**—I am against my colleague Mayor Taylor on some of the issues, because we would love to see them live in Toowoomba—the shire or city rivalry. We believe that we have more to offer, but I can understand where the Jondaryan shire is coming from on that issue: the base is out there and they would like to have the dollars in their city as well.

Toowoomba is very well serviced for all the infrastructure that they require. We do have the housing which Steve will tell you about in a moment. I believe that we have all the facilities and education. Toowoomba is probably, per head of population, the best off anywhere in Australia in education. We have large medical facilities. We are building a new theatre for \$13-odd million, and we have art galleries, universities and the like. We believe that they are going to be very well catered for as far as services to their lifestyle are concerned. One of the problems that Oakey has is that those lifestyle issues, which most probably these people are used to, are going to make it difficult for them to want to live in Oakey.

**Mr ADAMS**—Are you going to give them a reception on Singapore Day?

**Mr Miller**—We certainly have a multicultural day now. Next weekend or the weekend after we are having Chinese New Year—big celebrations on the weekend. We are very much in tune with those sorts of issues. We really want to integrate them into the community.

**Mr TRUSS**—Are there any additional services that the ratepayers of Toowoomba are likely to have to fund as a result of this agreement?

**Mr Miller**—Yes, there are: the water agreement. As you heard from Mayor Taylor, we believe that we have negotiated something for all concerned. Whilst capital dollars are going up for water, it will be repaid. The citizens will not be hit to leg or anything like that for this particular agreement.

As a key regional centre we have to take the lead because all the new large industries and things that are going to happen in the future are going to happen in Jondaryan shire. Being mindful of that, we have to be very cooperative in our approach. In taking this pipeline to Oakey, we are considering that there need to be offshoots into an estate just to the west of the city. We also have a shire out there—Rosalie—that will take water in due course. We are building all that in. As a city, we need to be very mindful that water is a major issue and we will not shirk that role as a regional role.

**Mr TRUSS**—Have you ever received any financial infrastructure contributions from the defence forces?

**Mr Miller**—No.

**Mr TRUSS**—Did you seek any in relation to this agreement?

**Mr Miller**—We have left that to Councillor Taylor who is a great negotiator.

**Mr TRUSS**—We will ask him shortly.

**Mr Miller**—It is in Jondaryan shire as far as the base is concerned. We have left that to the shire. We have certainly been there in support in those initiatives. We believe that at the end of the day we are hopefully going to end up with an agreement which we will all be satisfied with.

**Mr TRUSS**—Would you have any view on whether there should be travel subsidies paid?

**Mr Miller**—I do not think I want to help him that far. As I say, it is a friendly rivalry. We would certainly like to see them living in Toowoomba and I respect Councillor Taylor's rights to say that he would like them in Oakey.

**Mr TRUSS**—But you do not feel the benefits of Toowoomba are so great that they would travel without the subsidy?

**Mr Miller**—To be quite honest, I do not really know the answer to that. I have never really thought about that.

**Mr Taylor**—A subsidy would only apply to Australian forces, by the way, wouldn't it? I do not think it applies to Singaporeans.

**Mr Miller**—It is something that has not been an issue to me and, therefore, I have never really been concerned about it.

**Mr BARTLETT**—Both mayors have mentioned significant economic benefits. Have there been any attempts to quantify those or to target particular industries or areas of the community that might benefit?

**Mr Taylor**—We have heard the capital works figures that have been outlined this morning—\$30 million to \$35 million. I have heard ongoing maintenance figures of \$5 million per annum. We do not know the wages and that part. The flow-on effect has to be in the area of \$10 million per annum. I think that is a very agreeable figure for our local economy.

**Mr Miller**—I was pleased to hear the chairman ask the question about our local

suppliers being given opportunities. Unfortunately, with the Hilmer reforms, et cetera, it makes it a little more difficult, especially for local governments, to have any weighting for local contracts. I believe that, provided the community is well versed in what is going to happen with contracts, there is an opportunity there for them. The day-to-day food and maintenance things will certainly be a boost to our economies.

**Mr BARTLETT**—Are you confident that local industry can rise to that challenge fairly successfully?

**Mr Miller**—Yes, I have no doubt. Toowoomba is certainly well serviced in that area and backed up by Oakey.

**Mr Taylor**—There will be a lot of economic benefit there in the expansion. I think local companies are already winning a lot of areas. For example, the new runway that was built at the army centre recently. The major contract for the sub-base was Wagners company, which owns quarries in my shire. They won the majority of the contract.

**CHAIRMAN**—Stephen, can we come on to the vexing question—and I think it is perhaps a vexing question—

**Mr TRUSS**—Before the mayor goes, could we go back to this infrastructure question? It is the normal practice of your city council presumably to seek infrastructure contributions from major developers?

**Mr Miller**—That is correct.

**Mr TRUSS**—But in this particular case you felt it was inappropriate to ask for it?

**Mr Miller**—What is happening is that we are only take the pipeline, you might say, to the boundary and then it runs into Councillor Taylor's area. It has been an agreement from there as to what contribution we will put in and what charge of water we would supply. The contribution to the pipeline from our border to the base is really in Councillor Taylor's area.

**Mr TRUSS**—You are basically signing off then that there will be no requirements from Toowoomba City Council for future financial contributions as a result of the Singaporeans living in the city?

**Mr Miller**—Are you talking about the pipeline to the base?

**Mr TRUSS**—No. I am talking about other issues as well. I have asked you the question about whether there are any extra services that you are going to have to provide. I gather your answer to that is no.

**Mr Miller**—That is correct.

**Mr TRUSS**—You can just absorb these people and there will be no expectation of contributions?

**Mr Miller**—I understand that they are going to be renting housing. If there is a necessity for a developer to put a housing estate in or do those sorts of things, then we will get a contribution from that developer for that particular development. That will cater for no matter who is in that housing or whatever.

**CHAIRMAN**—Stephen, can we just come on to housing and assess not only Toowoomba but Oakey as well. Bearing in mind that we are not sure yet of the numbers of families, what is your assessment of the ability of the area to deal with the rough order of families that might be coming in?

**Mr Davis**—It does very much depend on numbers. It depends upon the standard of housing you would anticipate they would want to be in. If we treat the normal standard of housing of the Australian defence forces as the standard that they would want to achieve for the Singaporeans, I can see that there probably will be a shortfall. This is where the term of the agreement will depend upon how keen investors will then become to build new homes and new housing.

**CHAIRMAN**—I would suggest to you that the standard is at least equal to the ADF.

**Mr Davis**—Yes. At the present time in Toowoomba, that is the minimum—\$150 to \$220 per week standard accommodation, and probably closer to \$170 to \$220 would be the general norm. If you go to all the real estate agencies in town, they would have a vacancy rate for that type of housing of only about one per cent. So if you bring 100 families in, it will force that area of the market up. If they are just going to come in by themselves and negotiate rental agreements, that will force that area up. I can see there would be the opportunity to build then. Investors will be very encouraged to build if they see that have long term tenants. If they have got a tenant for only six months, it will not encourage them to build.

**CHAIRMAN**—What are you doing as an institute to consult with the Singapore High Commission to get down to some tin tacks on some of these things, in conjunction with QCCI et cetera?

**Mr Davis**—We have a property management branch. They have written to—I cannot tell you who it was—someone in the Defence forces volunteering to coordinate it for them. But as yet, I do not think they have had a reply to take them up on the offer.

**CHAIRMAN**—To the Singaporeans, or to the Australia Defence Force?

**Mr Davis**—It would have been Australian because they would not have had a contact. I think the initial effort was to make a contact through the Australian Defence Force because they thought that was the best avenue to do so.

**Mr Miller**—We had a conference very recently with both the Australian Army, the Singaporean Army, the REIQ and the QCCI to find out what the numbers would be. All we are waiting on are the final figures. Our building industry is like everywhere else—it is starting to get off the bottom at the moment. We have the opportunity here to put that in place immediately, because builders are looking for work. But we need to have more factual figures of the actual families. We heard 500 to start with; and now it is down to 250. We really do not know exactly what we are looking for. The industry is there, available, to make that happen.

**Mr TRUSS**—But you know the agreement runs to 2012, with options to extend. It that not adequate time frame security for you?

**Mr Davis**—As I understand it—and I could be wrong—the individual families go into the marketplace and negotiate their own rentals. I see that as a distinct disadvantage to them and the people who are going to provide the new housing for them. The general real estate agreement is for a six-month tenancy or a 12-month tenancy. If someone comes over from Singapore and goes into a real estate agency and tries to negotiate a six-month tenancy for accommodation, they will have difficulty in doing it. It probably will not be there to start with, or it will force the price up. Also, all real estate agencies ask for references from people. If people come from Singapore with nothing to recommend them, there will be some reluctance to take them on face value.

**CHAIRMAN**—How would you react to a suggestion that the Defence Housing Authority become an agent for the Singaporeans as a central focus? I can see John Ferguson scratching his head.

**Mr Davis**—It does need someone to do it—someone to say, 'Right, there will be so many families coming. We need to provide accommodation for them on a long term basis or a such-and-such a term basis,' and then the market will determine what they get.

**CHAIRMAN**—I am concerned, as the local member. I think we will need to discuss it in committee as to what we would propose. We make a lot of recommendations in this area, not just the actual ratification. But it seems to me that there is a lot of merit in having some sort of central focus, particularly for the housing, which I would see as a potentially difficult area if we do not watch it.

**Mr Davis**—I think it needs some guarantee that the people who are going to come and occupy those houses will be good tenants and will be responsible for the general maintenance.

**Mr Taylor**—It depends on what standard they want. We do not really know.

**Mr Miller**—I think we do. We have been told at that particular meeting.

**CHAIRMAN**—A high standard.



**Mr Miller**—Yes. At the end of the day, what concerns me also is that we do not want to go overboard. We do not want to end up with an oversupply.

**CHAIRMAN**—Yes.

**Mr Miller**—So it has to be well planned. I think we are really to go. What we need is firm figures and time lines that we can perform to. But we certainly do not want to have an oversupply with everybody ending up having problems.

**CHAIRMAN**—Are there any more questions for Ross Miller before he goes? Thank you, Ross. Peter Taylor, would you like to make some specific points?

**Mr Taylor**—My council has discussed my appearance before this committee. This does not happen on a lot of occasions—the mayor just goes and does it—but on this occasion it did happen. One thing that they wanted me to say to you is that this process is a bit late in the whole proceedings; that a public hearing is now be held when it seems that it is a fait accompli. I just make that comment and go no further with it.

**CHAIRMAN**—If I might react to that one because, as I said in my opening comments—and I think you were here—what we are faced with is 15 sittings days between the time that the treaty is tabled and my committee having to report back to the parliament. In some cases that is a very short fuse. If you have a few up-weeks, it becomes a little longer. This particular treaty was not tabled in the House until Tuesday of last week. We wrote letters out in advance of that. I agree with you that it is a very short fuse, but it is a very short fuse indeed for this committee.

**Mr Taylor**—I do not criticise the committee in any way. But the public perception probably is that this deal is already done and the Singaporeans are coming, yet there is an advertised public hearing today to make a point.

**Mr TRUSS**—The treaty has not been ratified yet.

**CHAIRMAN**—And it will not be ratified until we report.

**Mr Taylor**—Exactly. I can see your point—that the parliament has its say. But I am speaking on behalf of the public, I guess, who see it as all over red rover. That is the only point. Majority support—I think we have covered all of that. Generally our rural economy, of course, has some difficulties and, overall, we are welcoming additions to our economy. The Army centre, of course, do not pay rates. I have touched on that and I do not want to expand further. But we do have some significant services that, of course, the Army aviation do pay for and they do pay for them in full. So, on the contra-item, and particularly in the area of water, we have had very good cooperation from Defence. We provide sewerage for the Army aviation scheme.

A member of the committee asked: what are we doing to attract the Army? I might

just go to that. Water is one thing and it is significant. We will still have some higher costs at the end of all this but we will have a better product for our citizens, as will the Army and everybody else. I think that agreement is an agreeable agreement for everyone, but it will cost our ratepayers something. We are certainly spending significant amounts of money on sewerage. We are at capacity. With further increases in people in our area, we have to upgrade. We have recently purchased land and we are looking at an alternative proposal to take the effluent in the next stage of development away from disposal—as it is at the moment—to Oakey Creek, which is part of the Condamine-Belon system. Our proposal, which has already been planned, will take it to land re-use. So we will be building dams, storage. Without going into the technicalities, it will be land re-use of the sewage. It is, of course, an additional cost to our community to allow for these sorts of continuing expansions.

Let me say something about road improvements. I should congratulate the Commonwealth because the Commonwealth have been involved in road improvements. We are getting a \$13 million bypass for our town which we have long-awaited and we are very appreciative of that. So, again, although the Commonwealth is not paying rates, we are getting something back there.

We are doing improvements within our community to try to encourage more people to stay. We have built a community centre, which is quite new. We have further stages of that planned long term. The local swimming pool has been heated, for example, in recent times. So there are civic amenities. We are planning some improvements in our town centre amenity when the bypass takes all of the road train and heavy transport out of our town. We have some new developments, rural residential developments, which are quite comparable in standard to the city developments here. Of course, my shire comes to the city and I am well aware of the standard here—Cotswold Hills, Glenvale and all the western side of the city where there is quite up-market rural residential development and where some of these people could live. We are balancing that with similar developments in Oakey but, of course, it is a chicken and egg situation as to who goes first. Certainly there are improvements that have been made to the town and there are more planned.

As to the future, I should just comment that the Army Aviation Centre is a joint civil-military facility and we very importantly want to keep that the case. We do not wish to see it locked up to the military. We want civilian access for both aircraft and passengers maintained. It is not used very frequently at the present time. But, on a regional basis, it is accepted that Oakey in the future is the only viable alternative for improved passenger transport to our region, and we want to make sure that is maintained.

Last year I visited Canberra and had some discussions with the army and Defence about this and agreements verbally have been reached in relation to maintaining that civilian access, and even the relocation of the civilian terminal at the other end of the runway, at Defence's expense. So those agreements have been reached. I just draw it to the committee's attention to make sure that you are aware of it. But they are not finalised in writing. So there will be a job for me and, I suppose, the army to make sure that we finalise that in writing, bearing in mind that defence personnel change and, in fact, I could change because in a couple

of weeks I will be facing elections.

I guess recent concerns of loss of development have been drawn to your attention and I do not wish to expand on that. I do not think that is really relevant—Singaporeans coming to us; it is not an issue. But I again take the opportunity to draw to your attention that we wish to see all sorts of additional development. We have allowed for additional development in respect of the water pipeline. We have a gas pipeline and a major national highway. We thought we had a very appropriate site for a gas fired power station. The army were not able to reach agreement with a developer. The developer has now withdrawn his application to the council for that \$100 million development, and that certainly concerns me. We, of course, would like to see other development like abattoir expansion. We have a processing factory possibly coming on line. We needed the gas line to be expanded and more gas capacity to lead to these other additional developments.

We acknowledge that the Army Aviation Centre is a major employer in our region. Locally and regionally it is very important. We have supported them most strongly in the past. But we also need to see that we have other capacity to grow in other areas, because who knows what the future holds. We have value adding agricultural industries and others that are wishing to come to my area.

Overall there is great majority support, but there are still very minor concerns. I do not think any of them relate to race or race relations. I have had none of those. Having personally met Singaporeans, I think they are a group of people who will integrate into our community very well. The small issues are ones like noise, traffic. In recent days I have had raised with me the prospect that there will be additional traffic on the road. People who do not live in the local centre will commute regularly on the very highly trafficked road between Toowoomba and Oakey. At the moment there are about 8,000 to 9,000 vehicles a day and, of course, this will increase the traffic on the road.

So in terms of infrastructure, the national highway attracts probably mainly Commonwealth funding, with some state funding. Of course, we have a local responsibility for local funding to some of that highway as well. So noise, traffic and road safety are issues in terms of the increasing use of the facility and the growth there.

Air safety, air traffic patterns, night training and the like are very well managed presently. With respect to operations, they can still well maintain the circuit direction, and this should not impact on the town. But there is always some nervousness in the local community that there are going to be an additional number of aircraft and people coming and what impact it might have on them. I think your committee is well aware—and the army is certainly well aware—of those issues.

**Mr TRUSS**—I would like to ask Mayor Taylor what sort of stocks of housing Oakey has. Is Mr Davis able to give us any answers to that question?

**Mr Taylor**—I cannot personally answer that question in relation to what the stocks

are. A general summation would be there is probably a stock of lower quality housing. We have some new development that has been subdivided but not built on—quite a deal of it that has been provided, but not yet built on. There would be some spare housing, but I cannot answer any more than that.

**Mr Davis**—It would be my perception that Oakey probably does not have the overall standard of home that we have talked about previously of the kind that the DHA occupy in Toowoomba. Generally, it is a good standard home, but on a smaller scale.

**Mr TRUSS**—So it would require investors to provide more stock if a lot of the Singaporeans were to live in Oakey?

**Mr Taylor**—I think so. Probably the investors have been nervous in the past because of long-term arrangements to make a return on their investment. The land and the infrastructure are available, but they need some mechanism whereby investors can have confidence in building a higher standard of housing where they would get a return on their investment.

**CHAIRMAN**—This is a long-term arrangement of 15 years plus. That should be quite attractive to the investor, I would have thought.

**Mr Taylor**—We certainly have the land and now the water. The water was a major handicap. With the water coming we would have the land available. We have some equally promising areas for subdivision, as good as the edge of the city here has, and it is in my shire, anyway.

**Mr TRUSS**—Do you have any strategies in mind then to try and attract a larger proportion of the Singaporeans?

**Mr Taylor**—I am here today, aren't I? Part of the strategy is to make everyone aware of the present situation. The infrastructure requirements were lacking in terms of water, water quality, road bypass, and an amenity in the town centre. Some community facilities are being addressed.

**Mr TRUSS**—And are there adequate sports and other kinds of facilities to satisfy their needs?

**Mr Taylor**—There is a full range of sporting facilities. Private education is certainly not available in Oakey. Some health facilities would be of superior range in Toowoomba. Toowoomba is very close to Oakey in terms of travel time—18 minutes, depending on the traffic. It is very close. Many people commute now to private schools and medical attention.

**CHAIRMAN**—Don, did you have some other points to make from the QCCI point of view?

**Mr Christmas**—I would like to make a few points. We certainly strongly support the

development of industrial and commercial enterprises in the region. Councillor Taylor has referred to the recent situation in relation to the power house out there which is a bit disconcerting. We hope that that, of course, will proceed.

A couple of critical issues have been raised here this morning for the whole exercise and for the community as a whole. The coordination of housing is obviously one that we would like to see resolved. Whether that is done through the Defence Housing Authority, or the local agencies, it needs to be coordinated, and there needs to be a focus on that.

One of the other issues from the business community's perspective is that, whilst we recognise that it is very difficult with the current environment in terms of giving any priority or preference to local businesses, perhaps, it is up to us, as an organisation representing business to actually facilitate this. We certainly need to ensure that local businesses are fully briefed on the most appropriate ways of ensuring that they obtain a large proportion of the business that is available as a result of the expansion at Oakey.

In terms of the tendering process, we have found in the past that there is a lack of knowledge and expertise in that area and, obviously, that is something that needs to be brought up to speed. Obviously, there are huge potential benefits for the whole business community, not only in retail, but for the hospitality industry, the suppliers to the extended base, and business generally. We need to make sure that those business opportunities are optimised.

In terms of medical facilities for the families, I am just wondering whether that issue has been addressed and how it is going to be accommodated. I am not quite sure to what extent the Singaporeans will have their own medical people looking after families, or whether the current private and public medical facilities will be required to accommodate the added population that is associated with them. That is an issue that probably needs to be looked at.

You are probably aware that the state government has committed another \$60 million to upgrading the base hospital here in Toowoomba, and that should be operational by the end of 1998. The facilities that exist are probably more than adequate; it is a question of the upgrading of those facilities as time goes on.

In terms of educational facilities, there is probably an issue there in the dispersion of the additional school population. I certainly would not like to see the Singaporeans congregate in one school in one area. That will happen, presumably. Some will go to the state system, and some will go to the private system, I assume, and they will be at various stages in terms of their education. It would be a shame if they congregated in one area. I think that they will be well accepted. All of our private and public schools have a smattering of overseas students anyhow.

**CHAIRMAN**—We are going to hear, of course, from both education and health authorities.

**Mr Christmas**—I think that there are other issues in terms of the business community that probably have been addressed and will be addressed by other parties, but those particular aspects are aspects which I believe need to be identified and addressed. From the overall perspective of the Toowoomba Chamber of Commerce and the Queensland Chamber of Commerce and Industry, we strongly support the initiative and look forward to the opportunities that it presents. As I said, I think that our role as an organisation is probably to ensure that we maximise the opportunities for the local business community to ensure that it knows how to access the extra business that is going to be available.

**Mr TRUSS**—Mayor Taylor, you raised the issue of timing. When was your council first made aware of the fact that this agreement was a possibility?

**Mr Taylor**—I cannot recall that, sorry.

**CHAIRMAN**—About three or four years ago?

**Mr Taylor**—We have had reasonable advance warning of it.

**Mr TRUSS**—I guess the actual date is not as important as the question: do you feel as though you were adequately consulted during the process?

**Mr Taylor**—Yes, I believe that we were.

**Mr TRUSS**—And you had opportunity to raise concerns about the infrastructure needs of your community to service the region?

**Mr Taylor**—Yes. Probably in advance to that, we were already addressing some of the questions because of other possible future expansion of the base. Yes, I think it has been reasonable.

**Mr TRUSS**—Were there matters that you raised with either the Australian or the Singaporean authorities that have not been addressed in the agreement?

**Mr Taylor**—No, except the one about housing which I think is an issue that, locally, we would like to see more done on.

**Mr TRUSS**—Over the years that the Oakey base has been in existence, have you received infrastructure contributions from the Australian defence forces?

**Mr Taylor**—Not to my knowledge, no. They have paid for services at cost. They have run their own water supply to this point in time. I cannot explain simply to the committee the complexities of the water agreement because it is very complex. There is an arrangement. They get a reduced capital charge—because we have a water user charge—in return for an additional capital contribution from Defence for a long-term agreement of no access charges being made. So, there is a component of capital infrastructure in the water agreement. I cannot

think of other areas. A similar developer expanding, say, a shopping centre would have paid for road and other things. They are providing most of their own facilities on the base, but things such as the use of civic amenities are not contributed to by the Department of Defence.

**Mr TRUSS**—Whereas another developer providing a factory, say, that employed several hundred people would be providing those developments.

**Mr Taylor**—Another developer would be providing very significantly. For example, when he subdivides land a developer has to pay the parks and gardens contribution. Off the top of my head, in Oakey it would be approximately \$1500 per allotment. We do not get any of that.

**Mr TRUSS**—Right. So there is one issue that the Australian defence forces do not pay too much. What about somebody who is coming in to use the facility? Are you satisfied that that person, or group, should have an agreement that does not require them to make a contribution towards community facilities?

**Mr Taylor**—It is something that could be considered. The offset benefit to the regional and local economy, I suppose, has always been the argument not to ask for a capital contribution in this case. But, in thinking about it, I suppose the argument is that it is not much different from any other development, is it? For instance, a new abattoir makes a major contribution to your local economy as an employer, et cetera, but, as we all know, he would also make significant capital infrastructure contributions when he came.

**Mr TRUSS**—But has that not been an issue for your ratepayers?

**Mr Taylor**—No. I think that it is starting to become an issue because of the large size of the expansions. We will be putting up with additional traffic noise, dust, flying traffic, night training, et cetera. Therefore, the local people are saying that they want the local economy to benefit more in the future than it has in the past so that our town can benefit and not just pick up the disbenefits.

I am also very mindful of the regional cooperation we have between the shires. Yes, there is some friendly rivalry, but on the other hand, we are all trying to encourage development to come to our region and this is part of regional development. We have people travelling both ways on the road in the morning. Some go out to the army aviation centre to work, and live in Toowoomba. And we have people that live in Oakey and travel to Toowoomba to work, as well. So it cuts both ways. But we just feel that we need a fairer share for the local economy than maybe we have been getting in the past.

**Mr TRUSS**—If I can address to you the same sort of question that I asked earlier in relation to the power station development within the training area, what is your council's attitude towards that?

**Mr Taylor**—We would obviously like to see that development accommodated in our

area. We are mindful that the army raised some air safety issues and I guess we are disappointed that they were not able to be resolved between the developer, the army, and the appropriate authorities. That particular development had no local objection; in fact, it had community support in its proposed location.

The developers are looking for new sites, but I have already had some concern about where they might be going. We have no application at the present time. The developer, on receipt of the army's objection, and due to the possible time delays and being unable to resolve a problem, withdrew the application.

**Mr TRUSS**—So, it seems that the existence of the army training area maybe somewhat of a liability to your shire in attracting some industries?

**Mr Taylor**—In this one instance it has been. There certainly has been a constraint on that development. Again, it could have been an argument that we should in the future be receiving some capital contributions with expansion that could be used to help us on the way with other developments previously mentioned.

**Mr TRUSS**—To offset the loss?

**Mr Taylor**—To offset the loss of a business.

**Mr TRUSS**—Are there any restrictions on the civil use of the Oakey airstrip that are of concern to the community?

**Mr Taylor**—Not at present, I believe. The access is available with the normal constraints as it is in aviation and due to traffic. I happen to be a commercial pilot and I am not aware of any particular problems with entry and exit from the base facilities. In fact, I think that they are most helpful. But I just raise it to the committee's attention that we do not wish to see another Amberley type designation—or Pearce in Western Australia might be similar—where the airspace ultimately ends up being more the property of the military and is guarded a bit jealously. Here, we have that access and we have a very co-operative arrangement with the military presently and we wish it to continue.

**Mr TRUSS**—Okay.

**Mr Christmas**—From our perspective it is critical that Oakey remain open to civil aircraft because, obviously, the constraints in Toowoomba here place limitations on Toowoomba's development in terms of airspace in the future. It is very important for the business community to have Oakey for access for civil aircraft and, hopefully, larger aircraft in the future.

**CHAIRMAN**—Thank you very much.

**Short adjournment**



[11.24 a.m.]

**CHAPMAN, Mr Greg, District Manager, Toowoomba District Health Service, Queensland Health, PMB 2, Toowoomba, Queensland 4350**

**LENNOX, Dr Denis, Medical Superintendent, Toowoomba Hospital, Toowoomba District Health Service, Queensland Health, PMB 2, Toowoomba, Queensland 4350**

**CAMPLING, Mr Mark, Senior Review Officer, Department of Education, Darling Downs Regional Office, 178 Hume Street, Toowoomba, Queensland 4350**

**ROGERS, Ms Christina Joy, Principal Policy Officer, Department of Education, Darling Downs Regional Office, 178 Hume Street, Toowoomba, Queensland 4350**

**BARRETT, Dr Raymond George, Queensland Vice-Chairman, Australian College of Education, PO Box 1825, Toowoomba, Queensland 4350**

**CHAIRMAN**—Welcome. As some of you did not come until a little after we started the hearing, what I would invite you to do, either individually or as parts of groups, is to make very short opening statements and then we will go to questions. Do you want to make an opening statement on the education side or the health side?

**Mr Campling**—I will begin. We have already met with the Singaporeans once, for approximately one and a half to two hours late last year. Basically, at that meeting we presented a package outlining the facilities within the Darling Downs region but, more importantly, around the Toowoomba area and the Oakey area. During that one and a half to two hours they were able to ask any questions or clarify any issues.

**Ms Rogers**—The purpose of the meeting, from our point of view, was to ascertain the sorts of numbers we would be anticipating from the group. From their point of view, they were looking at the kind of facilities that both state and private education can offer. There were representatives from the private sector there as well.

We have been advised that in the first group that arrives we would anticipate no more than, I believe, 25 to 30 children. Because they will be fairly young couples, we anticipate that many of them will not be of school age and those who are will be lower primary. We also understand they will be settling across Toowoomba and Oakey and there is no plan for there to be one group in one area. Therefore, we see no significant effect on our state schools in terms of enrolments. We would anticipate that perhaps a primary school may look at two or three families settling in, and that is really no different than the kind of enrolment trends from year to year that our schools could anticipate.

**Mr Campling**—One of the major issues they talked about was the placement of a

child in a year level that was appropriate for that child so that when the child went back to Singapore there was an easy progression. We believe we have worked through that issue. We explained to them that there is a schedule which outlines where a child would normally be slotted into a year level, but we also outlined that in high schools, primary schools, private schools and state schools we also go through a series of assessments to make sure that that child should be going into that year level.

**CHAIRMAN**—So education, at the departmental level, you are satisfied with what you have heard so far from the Singaporeans. Is it an ongoing dialogue with them?

**Mr Campling**—We have kept it open with them.

**CHAIRMAN**—You are confident that you have identified the pitfalls, whatever they might be, and you can handle them.

**Ms Rogers**—Obviously if there was a settlement in one particular area and there were up to 20 children enrolling in one school then our approach may be a little bit different because that is going to be a significant change to that one school. But, as I said before, we do not anticipate that that will happen and therefore we think the enrolment of those students will not be a difficulty for our department at all.

**CHAIRMAN**—What about at the school level, both in terms of the state system and the private system?

**Dr Barrett**—It is fairly similar. We do not anticipate any pressure on school infrastructure, provided the students are judiciously placed. Even though the numbers are small, we can cope with an increase. In fact, the Australian Bureau of Statistics indicated that primary enrolments in the Toowoomba area fell in 1986-91. There is a capacity there unless we get a great surge of growth in Toowoomba, but it is a steady growth rate. We have excellent education provision in the area—government and non-government—and we have some of the best in Queensland. There is an opportunity for these students to further develop international understanding.

For example, at my school, Toowoomba State High School, we had nine exchange students last year from places like Germany, USA, Canada, Japan, Chile, Argentina and Sweden, and these students would add to that. There has been some excellent liaison work done initially and continuing by Margaret Monteith from the Army Family Liaison Unit. I have had visits from up to three years ago—certainly two years ago—and a follow-up visit by that group and people from Singapore, and we were very happy with that. If they are dispersed across government and non-government and Toowoomba and Oakey, there is not a problem.

**Mr Klan**—There are 11 private secondary schools and over 20 independent primary schools in Toowoomba offering a very wide range of possibilities of religious denomination and so on. We are aware that many Singaporeans are of non-Christian religion. That is not a problem. Any of these schools, although they are Christian foundations, enrol people—we

have Buddhist, Muslims, whatever, at the moment. Seven of those 11 secondary schools are boarding schools, so we know about international communities. We understand that in Singapore English is the language of communication in the schools, so it does not require ESL teachers and so on. But again, the matter of dispersing them through a lot of schools would be ideal for them to achieve the maximum benefit of their living in a foreign country. We would not want 20 in one class, for example. They would not benefit at all from the experience. We would welcome small numbers.

**CHAIRMAN**—Let us take education first before we move on to health. My colleagues have questions in the education area.

**Mr BARTLETT**—Presumably the non-government schools would be pleased to have more fee paying students from overseas coming in.

**Mr Klan**—Most of the non-government schools in Toowoomba operate on wait lists at the moment. We are probably unique in Australia. But there are movements and vacancies do become available from time to time. I suspect that nearly all of those independent secondary schools in Toowoomba are already full for next year, but the sooner we knew, of course, the more likely we would be to be able to find a place for them.

**Mr BARTLETT**—So if some of those students did want to go to a non-government school, there would not be a place for them at the moment, they would have to go to the state school?

**Mr Klan**—If we knew some months in advance, we would be able to find a place for them, because there is always movement in and out. We can be booked full for next year at this time, but by the time next year comes around three or four families will have transferred out. We would be able to find places for them.

**Mr BARTLETT**—In both government and non-government schools, would it be correct to say that there is a high degree of tolerance and harmony with students from Asia?

**Mr Klan**—Yes, within Toowoomba there is a substantially sized Sri Lankan community and a Japanese community, and they attend our schools as day students now. As I said, we have boarders from overseas as well.

**Mr BARTLETT**—And there has been no evidence of racial problems?

**Mr Klan**—No.

**CHAIRMAN**—As an observation, I saw in the Toowoomba *Chronicle* yesterday that the senior boarder prefect at Toowoomba Grammar School is from PNG, I think, so that gives an indication of it.

**Mr Klan**—That is right.

**Mr BARTLETT**—There are significant cultural benefits, I suppose, for Australian students as well, having students from overseas studying there?

**Mr Klan**—Indeed, yes.

**Dr Barrett**—I was just going to point out that one of the boys I interviewed for school captain at Toowoomba High was from Papua New Guinea. He was on the short list of three.

**Mr TRUSS**—In your discussions with the Singaporeans, did they indicate that it was their desire for the children to be spread amongst a range of schools? There may well be some natural tendency for the children to want to stick together and go to the one school.

**Mr Campling**—They just thought that is the way it would happen, because they would not be able to get the houses all in one area.

**Ms Rogers**—And that they would look at wherever they have settled, looking at the closest school to them.

**Mr Klan**—I think we would want to discourage them from moving into the one place, to point out to them that the best educational benefits for them would be achieved by having them scattered around various schools.

**CHAIRMAN**—It is a similar principle to the Australian Defence Force, where under Defence Housing Authority they are now well and truly dispersed. The last thing you want is a segment in one particular area. Anything more on the education side?

**Mr ADAMS**—I just want to make sure that you see benefits for the Australian students mixing with people from overseas in a educational sense, that there are major pluses in that. We need you to say yes, so that it can go on the record.

**Ms Rogers**—Certainly.

**Mr TRUSS**—One more question to the state people. Were there any discussions about contributing towards the cost of the education or will in fact the cost of educating these children be met by the taxpayers of Queensland?

**Ms Rogers**—As I understand it, our overseas unit in central office looks after this aspect of students coming in. I understand they will be granted temporary residence, which means that they are not fee paying. They will be exempt from paying those fees.

**Mr TRUSS**—So they will be paying no fees to go to state schools?

**Ms Rogers**—Only the charges that the particular school has.

**Mr TRUSS**—And there is to be no contribution from the Singaporean defence forces towards those?

**Ms Rogers**—As I understand it, there will be no contribution.

**Mr Klan**—In the independent schools, they would pay the same fees as Australian citizens if they have residency status, whereas full fee paying overseas students pay much more because the government contribution is deducted.

**CHAIRMAN**—We will move on to health. Do you want to make an opening statement?

**Mr Chapman**—I will, and Dr Lennox might follow up on some clinical issues and some specific discussions he has had with the Singaporeans. I have had discussions with the Australian defence forces last year and I think we were preparing for a visit then by some people, so I had to talk about the impact on health services. Toowoomba district covers Oakey and Toowoomba, and we are very interested in the impact that this group will have on us in terms of the delivery of public health care. We have a small hospital at Oakey and we have a large provincial hospital at Toowoomba.

Essentially what we will be wanting to know, I guess, is what services will be accessed. From initial discussions, it would appear that the Singaporeans would probably be privately insured and access the private system, but we cannot be sure of that. We would probably need to know any arrangements via the Medicare agreement and reciprocal rights that might be afforded to the Singaporeans. That would impact on what services they might access in terms of health care.

**CHAIRMAN**—Just on that, do you have ongoing discussions with the Department of Health in Canberra on that particular point?

**Mr Chapman**—Queensland Health may, but I do not know about those discussions, if there are any. From time to time there are certain nations with whom we have reciprocal rights and they are afforded access to our services.

**Mr TRUSS**—Could we as a committee make some inquiries about that in Canberra, about what is the arrangement in relation to reciprocal arrangements, Medicare and the like?

**CHAIRMAN**—Yes.

**Dr Lennox**—My understanding at the moment is that Singaporeans would be ineligible persons under the Medicare agreement, so they would be expected to pay the ineligible persons' rate to access services in the public system. They raised that question particularly with us when they visited and I was not able to give them authoritative information about it, but recommended that they should pursue that issue at the highest level

to ascertain the status of their citizens in terms of accessing the public health system in Australia.

**CHAIRMAN**—I think it is important that the Department of Defence takes that on board as a backgrounder, take it on notice as well to follow it up, because it is an important element of their conditions of service. I suspect that it may be reflected in their financial arrangements for coming to Australia, but I do not really know that. It may well be that there is an element in there for private health insurance or something. But I agree with Warren, it is an important issue that Defence needs to take on board as well. We will do that, through the secretariat, with the department in Canberra, raise it from that angle too.

**Dr Lennox**—There are a number of issues which are fairly important from the health point of view in consideration. Perhaps I will address those. There are four particular ones that I would like to address. First is the health of the Singaporeans themselves. They are obviously giving this a high priority. From our point of view, the advice we have received about the likelihood of the Singaporeans being scattered residentially within the community is probably quite positive. Obviously their ability to integrate into the community and to participate in this community has a significant impact upon their health status, and that is a very relevant issue for them. So the directions that they seem to be taking at the moment would indicate positively for their health.

**CHAIRMAN**—Just to interrupt, what you are suggesting is that really as a doctor you would like some assurances that Singaporean air force personnel coming here are medically fit. Is that basically what you are saying?

**Dr Lennox**—Not that so much. What I am simply saying is that their living circumstances will have an impact upon their health. If they had chosen to live in a group situation, there may be some risk of it becoming almost a ghetto type situation. If they were not able to integrate well into the community, from a primary health care point of view that will have a significant impact upon their health status. So the manner in which they integrate and participate in this community is a significant issue in respect of their ongoing health.

**CHAIRMAN**—I am sorry I interrupted.

**Dr Lennox**—That is fine. The second is the health of the local community. Once more, if the Singaporeans were, as a group, becoming residential in a small community, then that would have some significant potential impacts upon the health of that local community. Again, the ghetto effect, and from all of the primary health care perspectives, there would be some potential risk posed to the local community. However, if as they indicate, they were going to be dispersed residentially throughout these communities, then I would see no substantial impact to the health of our local communities.

There is the issue of their health status upon arrival, but I would imagine that would be addressed in the same way as any citizens entering Australia. Particularly if the Singaporeans, as I understand according to the agreement, would ensure that their citizens are in good health

before they arrive, I do not perceive any significant risk to the local community.

**CHAIRMAN**—I just make a comment—and again, for Colonel Edwards. Article 12 of the agreement under medical and dental says this:

1. The RSAF shall ensure that all RSAF Personnel are medically and dentally fit on arrival in Australia and shall be responsible for their continuing medical and dental support in Australia.

There is a question mark as to what that really means in practical terms—

2. Arrangements for access to medical and dental services for RSAF Personnel may be mutually determined in an Implementing Arrangement.

Another question on notice for Colonel Edwards is: when it is signed on 1 April, are we going to get down to that sort of detail? The overall umbrella is important but I think some of these personnel issues are going to prove whether this is a good move or a bad move.

**Dr Lennox**—Reference is made in part 2 of that article to the arrangements being determined and implementing arrangement. We have some interest in that arrangement. At this stage there has only been an informal communication between ourselves and the Singaporeans. We have not been party to the development of a formal arrangement.

**CHAIRMAN**—Again, I keep on looking at Colonel Edwards from the Department of Defence. We will get Defence back for further evidence in a moment. But are you saying that the Queensland Department of Health needs to have a closer working relationship with the Department of Defence as the department responsible? Is that what you are saying?

**Mr Chapman**—Most certainly. When we get into the implementing arrangement, we would certainly like to have some closer consultation and discussion.

**CHAIRMAN**—With the Department of Defence as the sponsoring department or direct with the Singaporeans? Would you prefer to do it through the Department of Defence?

**Mr Chapman**—In consultation with both parties, I would think.

**CHAIRMAN**—I guess both have to be involved. We might ask another question on that when you come back up in a moment.

**Dr Lennox**—The third point I would like to raise, Mr Chairman, is the utilisation of health facilities by the Singaporeans. We do not have any clear indication from them from the informal visit as to what they would do. They have simply explored the facilities available at Oakey and Toowoomba. They have given an informal indication to us that they are very satisfied and pleased with the facilities that they find.

From our point of view, it would seem that our facilities at every level are quite adequate to serve the needs of the Singaporeans. At the primary health care level, both in

Oakey and in Toowoomba, there are adequate primary health care services of a fairly high standard in this community, and they would be more than adequate for those requirements. At the secondary level, the facilities at the base hospital in Toowoomba would certainly be, in most respects, most adequate for the Singaporeans' needs. Again, the issue of their status in accessing those services is important. I do believe they have explored the private facilities in Toowoomba as well.

We have no indication from them at this stage as to which direction they may choose to move or whether in fact they would choose to access both public and private health facilities in Toowoomba. We do not anticipate any difficulties with our capacity in respect of the number. We have adequate capacity in terms of our health service resources and facilities to encompass this group.

The fourth issue that I wish to raise is the question of their participation with us in health service delivery. Again, just very informally, I understand that the Singaporeans may be interested in some participation in health service delivery, particularly in respect of emergency responses. Again, I have no knowledge about how that may be being considered at the formal level. But certainly, if there is a formal agreement and an acceptance of the Australian standards which are set for participation in emergency service responses, then I am sure southern and inland Queensland could benefit by their participation.

From our point of view, in respect of an emergency response which may involve the Singaporean air force, either in a disaster involving themselves or in which they are participating, we in our new development at the hospital are planning a multilevel carpark. At the top of that will be a helipad to receive helicopters for transport of patients and we are ensuring that that helipad is capable of handling the Puma helicopters flown by the Singaporeans.

**CHAIRMAN**—Thank you. Could I raise a relatively minor point, and it is immunisation. I do not want to get into the argument as to whether we should have compulsory immunisation or whatever, but do you see that as a particular problem with Singaporean children in relation to Australian children, or is that something you have not thought about?

**Dr Lennox**—Yes, we have. I do not have detailed information in front of me, but my understanding in fact is that the Singaporeans are doing far better than we are as far as immunisation of their children is concerned. In fact, I suspect that we do not face any significant risk. However, their immunisation status on arrival in Australia, I believe, would be one of the matters that should be addressed in the implementing arrangement regarding their medical status.

**CHAIRMAN**—So what you are basically saying is it is important that the Queensland Department of Health have a much stronger dialogue with the Department of Defence. Is that what you are saying?



**Dr Lennox**—Yes.

**Mr TRUSS**—I think that is the key thing. A whole lot of questions again are not answered and that has got to be addressed so that we know where there are areas of concern. I take it from what you are saying that there are no illnesses that Singapore has that are likely to be introduced into Australia as a result of this program.

**Dr Lennox**—There would be none that we would be particularly concerned about. Obviously, any international travel carries risks and—

**Mr TRUSS**—And we have a lot of commercial aircraft travelling from Singapore to Australia every day.

**Dr Lennox**—Exactly. And the risks would be no greater than they are for all of that traffic.

**CHAIRMAN**—Are there any other final comments—either education or health? We will invite Defence back shortly. They are making notes to take some of these things on notice anyhow. Thank you very much, indeed. You have been a great help.

Resolved (on motion by Mr Adams):

That the correspondence from the member for Toowoomba North and the correspondence from Mr Allan Shepherd from St James be authorised for publication.

[11.50 a.m.]

**BYRNE, Father James Lindsay, Catholic Chaplain, Army Chaplains Department, Bishops House, Margaret Street, Toowoomba, Queensland 4350**

**COSTIGAN, Father Kerry John, Parish Priest Oakey, Bishop's House, PO Box 756, Toowoomba, Queensland 4350**

**CHAIRMAN**—Welcome. Do you want to make any comments before we ask a few questions? Do you have any particular statement or comment to make in relation to the Oakey agreement, insofar as your religious involvement is concerned? If you so see fit, would you like to make some wider comments, perhaps on the social implications?

**Father Byrne**—I just mention that I was reared in Toowoomba. I was educated at Downlands College. In relation to education, students from Asia have attended in quite big numbers Downlands College and Grammar. It is 40 years since I left there, but they have always been wonderfully received. Father Albert Chan, a Chinese from Hong Kong, became a priest at Sacred Heart. So my understanding is that all these schools at Toowoomba have always had a fair sprinkling of people from Asia and Papua New Guinea. The community has been wonderful and Christian and I have never see any racial problems there. That is a little different from what you are asking us, I suppose, but that is my experience.

**CHAIRMAN**—From informal discussions that I have had with the Singaporean defence attache in Canberra, it is difficult to know at this point just what their religious breakdown will be. However, he thought that maybe about a third would be Christian and two-thirds would be predominantly Buddhist. How do you feel in an ecumenical sense, not just in a Catholic sense, that the area would be able to deal with particularly the non-Christian group?

**Father Byrne**—It is a little unknown, I would think. I do have some Vietnamese Buddhists in my parish at Wilsonton. The children are Catholic in one case and their parents are still Buddhist. I do not know. There are Buddhist and there are Muslims here in Toowoomba and they do have a church here in Toowoomba. But I am not au fait as to what they have there. Military-wise, no matter what crew you belong to, as the chaplain you address everyone and care for everyone, and it has always been that way. There are not a lot of Asians. Over the years I have met Malaysian descendants in the defence force. The chaplaincy itself addresses this.

As to the wider community, I think Toowoomba is a hybrid religious area which just about covers all possible churches and there is a great respect among churches. The community would simply have to open up the avenues for them to access their own church. The Christians would have no problem. There is a surplus of Christian denominations and schools throughout Toowoomba. I think they would open up avenues for Buddhists. The

chaplain is the minister fraternal here in town. It is a pity that it is just RCs here.

**CHAIRMAN**—We have got some written evidence. They were coming; in fact, they have been and left.

**Mr ADAMS**—You have no difficulty in offering pastoral care to the Singaporeans from your church point of view and you do not believe there will be any difficulty from other denominations?

**Father Murphy**—That would be correct, yes.

**Father Byrne**—I have quite a lot of Vietnamese, Filipinos and Sri Lankans in my church every Sunday. All these people are very religious; Singaporeans similarly. They have a great devotion and faith for their Christian religion in the Thomson Road Church in Singapore. There would be no problem, I wouldn't think.

**CHAIRMAN**—They sometimes say that if you want to find out some information you either go to the parish priest or you go to the local hairdresser and have your cut. Just on this particular proposal, have you in any way had any negative reactions within your parishes as to what is proposed? Do you hear around the traps? Is what you are hearing completely positive in relation to what is being proposed or is that perhaps asking too much of you?

**Father Costigan**—I know it is not a tricky question. At Oakey, being the local Catholic priest on the spot, I find there are quite a few, our brothers and sisters of Aboriginal descent and quite a number there. People are used to having different cultures around. I understand that most of these people are going to be living in Toowoomba. I must admit, quite honestly, that the people of Oakey are—'apprehensive' would be too strong a word—wondering. They are asking questions to see how it all works. This is the Oakey community I am talking about. I know it fairly well. I would not say there is any antagonism to that.

**CHAIRMAN**—They want to see the detail.

**Father Costigan**—Yes. They want to see how it all works out. I think they would welcome them.

**CHAIRMAN**—Is that a fair comment?

**Father Costigan**—It all gets back to the people involved. I do not think there would be any antagonism to them. There might be a bit of apprehension just to see how it works out.

**Father Murphy**—Kerry is on the spot. That is where they are going to be, isn't it? Jim will be speaking on behalf of Toowoomba. I doubt very much whether any would be going further west to Dalby. If they did and they would like to live there our schools would be open to them. I know they would be welcomed by all Christian bodies in the town. In a place like Dalby we are very inexperienced in multiculturalism. Dalby people go to Melbourne and they

come back and say, 'Gee, there are a lot of Asians down there.' It is not a big deal with them, but I think they would not be worried by it. We have got Filipino women who are married to some of the local people. I cannot see any big hassle at all.

**CHAIRMAN**—Did you want to make another comment?

**Father Byrne**—I just wanted to say that I think it would be very negligent of ourselves if we just presumed it was going to be okay and that they were going to settle down all right. Tolerance is a thing that has to be worked out all the time. I feel that the present climate in Australia is quite divisive. A lot of things have been said—without mentioning certain names—that have caused a little division around the place. You only need a handful of those people to get their backs up. To just leave them unchaperoned and to presume everything was all right I think would be incredibly—

**CHAIRMAN**—What you are saying is that it has got to be worked at. It is a two-way process and we cannot just assume that everything is going to go according to Hoyle without actually working at it. Jim, you would have disappointed me if you had not made a social comment. I am pleased you have done that.

**Father Byrne**—From the Vietnamese experience, I might just add that for 10 or 12 years in my parish I have found the four or five families that live there to be tremendous people, never at the door for a handout. Some people in the parish would visit them, not many—they are at mass, at church every Sunday—but it is interesting that there has not been a rush of people. They respect them, they look lovely, they dress lovely, but I think there is a tendency to leave them in their own little circle a fair bit. You see it in a bigger scale in Cabramatta and places like that in Sydney. But we are silly if we presume it is going to work.

**Mr ADAMS**—I think the sports and things overcome some of those things.

**Father Byrne**—Certainly.

**Mr BARTLETT**—Have each of you within your own congregations proactively addressed the issues of racism in terms of teaching in your parishes?

**Father Costigan**—Yes, I remember some time ago now in the pulpit giving a series of talks giving my opinion about the whole matter, so they certainly have been told at Oakey. And they know these people are coming and I have kind of warned them that we have to be tolerant and accepting and remember that they are going to be strangers in this strange land until they settle in too.

**Mr BARTLETT**—And do you feel that your congregations have been responsive to that message and to the responsibility?

**Father Costigan**—I am sorry I cannot say that because we have got to wait. But hopefully we will keep plugging.

**Mr TRUSS**—In addition to that, the point that I made to the media earlier is that, even though this is a long-term agreement, the actual Singaporeans are going to be coming and going at fairly regular intervals, so this will be an ongoing thing. It will not be a matter of developing a relationship with one Singaporean; he will go home and will be replaced by someone else. So you will have to work at this as a community for the whole life of the agreement.

**Father Byrne**—As long as there is balance in it. There is a lot being said and church-wise we have a lot of special committees on Aboriginal problems at the present time here in our dioceses, but as long as there is a balance, that these people are not being left out of all that social and justice and peace concern. They are in the community. I think it is wrong that we just presume that they are okay. I think the church has to make room for them too.

**CHAIRMAN**—It goes back to what I said right at the beginning. It was an initial problem at Pearce, where they just were not part of the community, and I think it is important. And it was not altogether their fault, some of the fault was on the Australian side as well. So I think it is incumbent on this area to have to work at that, either through their churches or through community groups, and just work at it and not be complacent about what might happen.

**Father Byrne**—Could I just ask one question. I am ignorant of this, but do they have such personnel as chaplains in the Singaporean army?

**CHAIRMAN**—I honestly cannot—would anybody know, do they have chaplains in Singapore armed forces?

**Father Murphy**—It would be a good point of contact if they did.

**CHAIRMAN**—Now that you have raised that issue, it is something that Defence can look at, because it is clear that there has to be this continuing dialogue in terms of community assimilation, and if they do not have chaplains—I think they do but perhaps I am wrong—then there has to be a point of contact for you as a local chaplain here. You really need a point of contact, don't you.

**Father Byrne**—With the Indonesians who have been here recently, it took me a long time to explain quite what I was to them. They were very friendly and nice and some would say they did have Christian faith and some were not, but I got the impression they were not really familiar with chaplains.

**CHAIRMAN**—That is interesting. That could be taken note of. As there are no more questions, thank you very much, gentlemen.

[12.05 p.m.]

**BIGGS, Mr Ian David Grainge, Executive Director, Treaties Secretariat, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Casey Building, John McEwen Crescent, Barton, Australian Capital Territory 0221**

**FISHER, Mr John Douglas, Executive Officer, Philippines-Malaysia-Singapore-Brunei Section, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Casey Building, John McEwen Crescent, Barton, Australian Capital Territory 0221**

**BROWN, Mr Stephen Paul Keating, Assistant Secretary, Legal Services Branch, Department of Defence, Canberra, Australian Capital Territory 2600**

**EDWARDS, Colonel Michael John, Director of Coordination, Corporate Support, Army, Army Headquarters, Russell Offices, Canberra, Australian Capital Territory 2600**

**MELLOR, Brigadier William Julian Andrew, Commander, Aviation Support Group, Department of Defence (Army), Army Aviation Centre, Oakey, Queensland 4401**

**CHAIRMAN**—I welcome back the witnesses from Defence and Foreign Affairs and Trade. I remind you that you are still sworn. There are a number of issues there that you will obviously have to take on notice, and I have not listed them all down, but there are quite a few. Is there any particular supplementary comment that either Defence or Foreign Affairs and Trade want to make at this point?

**Col. Edwards**—Mr Chairman, as part of the discussions the responsibilities for Defence, as part of this arrangement, have obviously come under discussion. At this stage we have got the primary agreement, with the supplementary implementing arrangements. Those implementing arrangements, covering operations, logistics, finance, facilities and commercial support, are really targeted at the military part of the arrangement.

What we have stated in the agreement, in fact article 12, which covers medical, is that we expect both the members and the dependants to come medically fit, and essentially they are responsible for their own medical support while they are here. There are two aspects to that. One is the military medical support on base, and the implementing arrangements on finance specifically cover the arrangements for that. In terms of other infrastructure support, as you would be aware from the evidence that has been given to date, there have been quite a number of discussions with the Singapore authorities, and they have sent teams out in the recent past to discuss these things with Queensland education, with health and with the local community here.

It is a question of where Defence fits into this equation at the moment. I believe we need some type of arrangement set up. It is a question of whether it is a Defence implementing arrangement or whether our responsibility really is to help facilitate the Singapore authorities

speaking directly to Queensland Health, and then Queensland Health talking to Commonwealth Department of Health and Family Services, to sort out their status under Medicare and such things. I think the Singaporeans would eventually need to work up some official type of arrangement with the local health authorities on that.

It is similar with education; I think the same. Because of the Commonwealth and state responsibilities in terms of that, I would suggest that that would be the way to go. But I would not see specifically education and health for the dependants being part of these formal implementing arrangements. Maybe I would ask Mr Stephen Brown to just talk further on that.

**Mr Brown**—Yes, I would agree with those comments, Mr Chairman, that the philosophy underlying the agreement was that infrastructure services that were required by the Singaporean detachment should be negotiated by them directly at their own expense with the wider community, not that it would be mediated or negotiated through Defence, though, as Colonel Edwards has indicated, we can certainly play a role in ensuring that that proceeds down the proper track. But it is basically something that needs to be negotiated directly between the Singapore authorities and the state authorities.

**CHAIRMAN**—That might be the legal and administrative way that perhaps ideally it should go, but, even listening to the evidence this morning, it just seems to me that there are a number of areas that, if we do not watch it, will fall down the cracks between what the left hand is doing and the right hand is doing. So it just seemed to me—I do not know how my colleagues feel—that at the very least I would see that Defence might have a round table with all of these authorities in very short order to say, 'Look, these are the sorts of issues that have come up in the hearing, a lot of which are not our responsibility, but clearly they need to be addressed, and they need to be addressed satisfactorily.' That is all I am saying.

And I would just ask that Defence could take that as the lead responsibility to ensure that that happens. Is that the way you are feeling, Dick?

**Mr ADAMS**—Mr Chairman, I would just like to say that I think that there need to be liaison officers so that people involved in health in the community know there is a phone number to ring, there is a liaison officer to deal with in relation to this. I would think that from the education perspective as well, when things are settled, there is a contact point too which is pretty public in that sense.

**CHAIRMAN**—Before we finalise the report to the parliament on this, we will need to discuss it. I suspect that we will need to get you back in Canberra to talk. The way I see it, we need to have some more substantive answers to some of these questions before we can really put our hands on our hearts and make recommendations to the parliament. Is that being unrealistic?

**Col. Edwards**—I do not believe so. I would see our responsibility, as I said, to help facilitate that and we will continue to do that. We work very closely with the defence attache

and, more recently on this, almost on a daily basis. And certainly, while we do not want to get into the detail, I think that our responsibility is to make sure that it is facilitated. At the end of the day there are a number of formal arrangements set in place with Queensland health and Queensland education similar to the types of things that we have got for the military aspects. So, at the end of the day, that would be the desired outcome. It is a matter of facilitating it.

From what I heard from the evidence that was given from health and education, obviously, there needs to be some liaison with the Commonwealth departments, particularly health, to ascertain the status of these people. I think that can be done through Queensland health liaising with the Commonwealth and we can help facilitate it from our side of things. But we should not be a formal party to it; we should help facilitate it.

**CHAIRMAN**—A sort of coordinating role, that is all.

**Col. Edwards**—And we will undertake to do that. When these arrangements are tied up, I am not sure. The military implementing arrangement has already been signed and can be amended by the two chiefs of our army and Singapore air force at any time because it is a lower level document than the treaty level document we are working on today. I would see there being a similar type of arrangement between, possibly, some authority in Singapore and one of the authorities here in Queensland with health and education. That can be done, but I would not see those arrangements set in place for a while yet just because of the normal process that we will have to proceed through.

**CHAIRMAN**—Our practical time scale is that the last day on which I can table a report on this, under the 15-day rule, is 24 March. So, we have got a little longer in terms of this particular one than we might have had had we sat all the way through. But, nevertheless, it is a pretty short fuse.

**Col. Edwards**—Is it your expectation that formal arrangements between Queensland health and education would be signed with Singapore by that time?

**CHAIRMAN**—No. What I am suggesting is that people understand that there is a problem and that those solutions are being addressed and that we can, in the context of our report, say to the parliament that this is a potential area, however it is recognised, and that it is on its way to—

**Mr TRUSS**—The aspect of it that concerns me, as you may have gathered from my questioning, is the contribution the Singaporeans are going to make to these sorts of cost of living issues.

**Col. Edwards**—I appreciate that.

**Brig. Mellor**—Can I just make a statement that we are doing this in isolation from a very important party here which is the Singaporeans. They are—



**CHAIRMAN**—I was just about to make a comment because I have had some discussions.

**Brig. Mellor**—They are vitally interested in the health and welfare of their own people and we may not be in a position to have firm answers back from them to meet that deadline.

**CHAIRMAN**—I understand that and, ideally, and as chairman of this committee, I wanted the Singaporeans to be here today, at least as observers. The defence attache agreed with that. He made recommendations to Singapore that they send somebody down at a very high level. That was rejected and the indication to me through the defence attache was that they wanted the Department of Defence, Canberra, to handle it.

From what you are saying, we have to watch that some of these things do not fall down our cracks. I am disappointed, too, that they are not here. I understand the decision they have made, but it would have been very helpful at least if they had been here today and I will be certainly talking to Colonel Looi next week when I get to Canberra and making some of these points. I am sure you will, as well.

**Col. Edwards**—Can I just make the point that the Department of Defence represents the Department of Defence's interests, not the interests of the Republic of Singapore air force.

**CHAIRMAN**—That is exactly right and I think that they may have misunderstood that.

**Col. Edwards**—By the time we have the next hearing—whenever it is—I think that we will be in a position to have consulted with the parties and will be able to give you a fairly firm statement of where we stand and what the process will be in the future to develop those formal arrangements.

**CHAIRMAN**—Just to give you a heads-up: I think that it would be fair to assume that we will be wanting you to come back some time towards the end of the next two sitting weeks, say, about two weeks from now.

**Col. Edwards**—We will be able to liaise directly with both state and Commonwealth departments in conjunction with the Singaporeans. As I said, we will facilitate this just to make sure it happens and I think we will be in a position to report back to you the process that will be set in train to achieve, at the end of the day, formal agreements between Singapore and the respective departments.

**CHAIRMAN**—Thank you. Does DFAT have any further supplementary things?

**Mr Fisher**—There is just one matter. It is not actually in the portfolio interest of DFAT, but just some information that might be useful to the committee. In another life I was an immigration officer, and Mr Truss was asking about status of forces agreement and people wishing to remain in Australia. I dealt with a member of US personnel who wanted to stay in

Australia after having met and decided to marry an Australian woman. It is my understanding that such people are subject to the same immigration requirements. You may wish to check that formally with the department. I dealt with that case a couple of years ago. That person was subject entirely to the same immigration requirements.

**Mr TRUSS**—And can you confirm also that they would be completely outside of the quota arrangements that apply for various categories of entry into Australia?

**Mr Fisher**—They fall within whatever arrangements apply. If they were applying as an employable—

**Mr TRUSS**—I meant their initial entry.

**Mr Fisher**—Indeed, they do.

**Brig. Mellor**—It has been my experience that they have to actually leave the country and then come back in again, even if that just means flying to New Zealand and back again in one day. The point was raised earlier on about making sure that the information was passed around to the local community in terms of the business aspects. There is, in fact, a briefing today at Oakey. It is an industry brief on the facilities and it is being conducted by the facilities people who are here.

**CHAIRMAN**—Thank you very much, gentlemen.

[12.21 p.m.]

**CHAIRMAN**—We will now go to the segment where we will be inviting individual submissions to the committee. Welcome, Mr Stanbridge. In what capacity are you appearing before the committee?

**Mr Stanbridge**—As a private citizen and a Christian.

**CHAIRMAN**—Would you like to make an opening statement?

**Mr Stanbridge**—Yes. I would like to say that all my studies show that Australia is a Christian nation. It is from this point of view that I am very concerned about this particular treaty and the subsequent arrangements.

**CHAIRMAN**—What do I understand you to say? Are you saying that what is being proposed involves the coming into Australia of people who are non-Christian? Therefore you are opposed to it? Is that what you are saying?

**Mr Stanbridge**—I am opposed because they are military personnel, essentially. I would like to say that 73 per cent of Australians questioned in the 1991 census stated that they were Christians in their beliefs. More people go to church on Sundays than actually go to football matches on Saturday and Sunday.

**CHAIRMAN**—You have confused me. You said that you use Christianity as the benchmark but then you said that you are opposed 'because they are defence people.' What are you saying? Are you saying that you are opposed because these people are coming in as non-Christian defence people? Or are you opposed because they are coming in as non-Christians?

**Mr TRUSS**—Or are you against defence?

**CHAIRMAN**—Or are you against defence? What are you saying to us?

**Mr Stanbridge**—No, I am not against defence at all. What I am saying is that I am concerned about the religious allegiance of the Singaporeans. It has been stated here by education department personnel, quite correctly, that these people are most likely to be of the Islamic faith or the Buddhist faith. It is my understanding that fervent Muslims regard Christians as infidels and that they get a wonderful arrangement in heaven if they actually kill Christians. I am saying that of fervent followers of the Islamic faith.

We do not know anything about the religious affiliations of these particular Singaporeans. It is my information, gained from many studies by many people, that it may well be that Australia is very open to invasion in the future. That has been stated by a very

high-ranking army officer in the magazine *Jane*, which talks about technical details of military hardware. That magazine is available in all newsagents. It has been in existence for many years and has a very high reputation.

**CHAIRMAN**—Are you making the same comment about those already in Australia who may be non-Christian? What are you saying to us?

**Mr Stanbridge**—It can apply. I would like to say at this stage that I certainly am not a racist. I have Indian and Pakistani friends and I am actually sponsoring a little Pakistani girl who is in a Christian school somewhere in Bangladesh. I have been doing that for 18 months. I have friends of all races. It is my belief as a Christian and as a scientist—and I see the evidence which confirms it—that we are all created by God anyway, so we are all of the family of God.

It has been said that these Singaporeans will have temporary residence. It has not been stated whether they will swear any kind of oath of allegiance. Therefore, if an invasion were to occur, whom are they going to be fighting for?

**Mr TRUSS**—They will not swear allegiance to us because they are still Singaporeans. They are not Australian citizens. Their loyalty is to the Singaporean army. That is beyond dispute. If there were to be any dispute or threat to Singapore, there is not the slightest doubt that the Singaporeans would be withdrawing them home as fast as they could.

**Mr Stanbridge**—Yes. But what I am saying is that, if Australia is invaded, where is their allegiance going to lie? The most likely nation to invade us is one that has 180 million people in it. It is a very aggressive nation, given its record in Timor. These people have been spending millions and millions of dollars on arming themselves with ex-German warships, buying one million machine-guns and all these kinds of things.

**CHAIRMAN**—Mr Stanbridge, may I interrupt you. I think it is very important that you understand that there is a big difference between 250 members of the Republic of Singapore Air Force, coming into the Army Aviation Centre at Oakey in Queensland, and the ABRI, the Indonesian armed forces. We are not dealing with Indonesia. We are dealing with a specific agreement—a bilateral agreement and a very important one—between Australia and Singapore. With due respect, your comments are about Indonesia and are peripheral.

You may have particular views—and I have to say that those views are shared by some people—but at the same time I also have to say to you that those views are, in fact, unsubstantiated. From what I have seen, such views are written in many ways by people who have very little knowledge of what life is all about and, in particular, of what international life is all about.

**Mr Stanbridge**—I resent that. I am well aware of lots of facts.

**CHAIRMAN**—I did not say you; I said those who write.

**Mr Stanbridge**—I know we are talking about Singaporeans and not Indonesians, but the religious faith of the Singaporeans is in line with that of most Indonesians. Most of them are of the Islamic faith, or perhaps the Buddhist faith as well.

**CHAIRMAN**—There is a big difference.

**Mr Stanbridge**—They are not Christians, all right? The boundary of Singapore is, of course, with Indonesia and their loyalties are more likely—almost certainly—to lie with the Indonesians rather than with this particular Christian nation. I am saying that the presence of these people, in a military aspect here in Australia, could assist an invading army. I regard that as a possible significant danger.

**CHAIRMAN**—Have you ever dealt with ASEAN nations, of which Singapore is one and Indonesia is another? Are you aware of the pressures that go on within that organisation alone? How could you make a such a comment—a very unsubstantiated one—that simply because they are Singaporeans, they would have more affinity with Indonesians? There is no basis in fact for that comment whatsoever.

**Mr Stanbridge**—I beg your pardon; yes, there is.

**CHAIRMAN**—What is it?

**Mr Stanbridge**—Because they share a common faith, they live on the same continent.

**CHAIRMAN**—They do not share a common faith. That is the basic misgiving that you have got. Islam is quite different from Buddhism and Taoism.

**Mr Stanbridge**—I am well aware of that. But Indonesians have both of those faiths.

**CHAIRMAN**—Yes, they do.

**Mr Stanbridge**—And so do Singaporeans.

**CHAIRMAN**—But Islam is predominant.

**Mr Stanbridge**—Yes. That is right.

**Mr BARTLETT**—Would your feeling be the same towards immigrants from Anglo-Saxon countries that were not Christians? I am trying to get to what the basis—

**Mr Stanbridge**—Yes. I am not picking on the Singaporeans, in particular. Any group or race of people that does not hold the Christian faith could definitely be a threat to Australia.

**Mr BARTLETT**—That is the essence of your concern, rather than race, or the defence issue. The essence of your concern is the faith.

**Mr Stanbridge**—Yes. That is right.

**Mr TRUSS**—Is your view, more generally, that we should not permit the immigration of non-Christian people to Australia, as well?

**Mr Stanbridge**—Any people who immigrate to Australia and swear the oath of allegiance, if they do not swear it truthfully then, of course, they are a threat to this nation because we are a Christian nation. If they are prepared to swear the oath truthfully—and under the obligations of the Coronation Oath that is what the duty of allegiance is all about; it requires people to uphold the laws of God and to maintain the true profession of the Gospel—they are very welcome.

I am a Christian. People from all nations can and do become Christians. Their race is completely irrelevant to me and it is irrelevant to God, as well.

**CHAIRMAN**—But your assertion that we are a Christian nation is wrong. We are not a Christian nation; we are a nation in which there are a lot of Christians. You cannot assert and collectively say that Australia is a Christian nation. We have a multicultural society—and I am not going to go into the argument about what is a multicultural society, other than to say that we have assimilation within our nation of lots of ethnic groupings, religions, languages—and this country has been enriched as a result of that. Yes, there are some problems. Of course, there are some problems, but to assert that Australia is a Christian nation, I would suggest to you, is a basically wrong assertion.

**Mr Stanbridge**—I reply to that, with respect, Mr Taylor, you are wrong. It makes it quite clear in our constitution of Australia. In the preamble it states:

Whereas, the people in New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, Queensland and Tasmania, humbly relying on the blessing of Almighty God, have agreed to unite in one indissoluble federal Commonwealth under the Crown of the United Kingdom and Great Britain and Ireland, and under the Constitution hereby established.

If you have read the Coronation Oath, you will know that the monarch, since 1689, has always had to swear before the crowning and, indeed, before he or she could be crowned, to do four things: to uphold the laws of God; to maintain the true profession of the Gospel; to uphold the laws of the land, and to administer justice with mercy and righteousness. That, Mr Taylor, is the oath of allegiance that you took under section 42 of the constitution, and it requires you by law and before God, to uphold those things, as well. All ministers of the Crown, all judges and, indeed, all subjects of the Crown—because we all have a duty of allegiance to the monarch—are required by law to do that. That is a fact.

**CHAIRMAN**—But that does not specify—we are going to have an in-depth argument here about 16—

**Mr TRUSS**—As members of parliament, we did not actually swear that oath; it was a different oath. It is actually in the back of the constitution—

**CHAIRMAN**—You are going back to the Bill of Rights of 1689. Next, you will be going back to the Magna Carta.

**Mr Stanbridge**—That is right. That is all part of—

**CHAIRMAN**—Yes. That is what I thought you might say, and I know exactly where you are coming from.

**Mr Stanbridge**—Yes. I know where you are coming from, too, because section 118 of the constitution—I am talking about the law here—says:

Full faith and credit shall be given throughout the Commonwealth to the laws, the public acts and records and the judicial proceedings of every state.

That is to the laws. The Imperial Acts Interpretation Act of 1984, Queensland, states quite clearly that the Magna Carta and the Bill of Rights of 1689 are still part of Queensland law and they are there for ever because it is written in them. Nothing in law can remove those laws.

**CHAIRMAN**—You have obviously been reading a lot of Mr Pitt's circulation.

**Mr Stanbridge**—No. I read that for myself. I did not need Mr Pitt to tell me that, but he is correct.

**CHAIRMAN**—Thank you very much. Do you have any final comments you wanted to make?

**Mr Stanbridge**—Yes. The army and the police all wear the crown on their shoulders—or they used to—because the monarch is the Commander-in-Chief of all the armed forces and the police. I know that that is administered through the Governor-General, but the Governor-General has also sworn the oath of allegiance and he has that duty of allegiance, as well. Section 44 of the Constitution states:

Any person who—

(i.) Is under any acknowledgment of allegiance, obedience, or adherence to a foreign power, or is a subject or a citizen or entitled to the rights or privileges of a subject or a citizen of a foreign power . . .

shall be incapable of being chosen or of sitting as a senator or a member of the House of Representatives.

It makes it quite clear in law that our loyalty is to our monarch and to the nation of Australia. If a member is not prepared to do that, then he cannot legally sit as a member of the House of Representatives.

**CHAIRMAN**—Mr Stanbridge, we can have that argument in the context of the

people's convention later this year. We are digressing—with due respect—from what we are here to discuss. Specifically, we are here to discuss the bilateral agreement with Singapore in relation to the Army Aviation Centre. Your basic argument, as I understand it—correct me if I am wrong—is that this should not be carried through because what we are doing is allowing people to come into this nation under the parameters of that agreement who are non-Christian. Is that basically what you are saying?

**Mr Stanbridge**—I wish to stress that it is in a military capacity. That is what I am saying. In effect, they are here and they can act as spies and agents of possible subversion.

**CHAIRMAN**—I understand that. Have you any further comments before we finish? We have people like Mr Marney there champing at the bit to come up.

**Mr Stanbridge**—I appreciate that. I would like to add that now we have the gun laws which, in effect, is disarming Australia, so this is particularly relevant.

**CHAIRMAN**—I am sorry. I am going to have to cut you off. This has absolutely nothing to do with what we are discussing here. The firearm legislation and some of these arguments about constitutional monarchy as against republicanism have got nothing to do with what we are here for today. We are specifically here to discuss the Singapore Armed Forces.

**Mr Stanbridge**—Yes. I am taking the long-term view. I have not raised the matter of the republic; you did that. We are a constitutional monarchy. This is the constitution; that is what it says; that is what we are and we have been since 1901.

**CHAIRMAN**—Today is not the forum in which we discuss firearms legislation, or some of these issues. Unless you have some more specific points to make about this particular agreement, then I do not really think that the committee has any further questions for you.

**Mr Stanbridge**—While we are on the disarmament issue; Indonesia is not being disarmed, nor is China. Why is just Australia being disarmed?

**CHAIRMAN**—I am sorry, Mr Stanbridge, that is for a separate forum. I am very happy to debate some of these issues with you in a separate forum, but not in the context of the Singapore Air Force agreement for the Army Aviation Centre at Oakey.

**Mr Stanbridge**—Can I ask you for what purpose are the Singaporeans being brought here?

**CHAIRMAN**—You have already heard. You have heard from the department and you have heard the strategic arguments from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. The bottom line is the Five Power Defence Arrangement of which we are a party, as is Singapore. It is all very strongly associated with the Five Power Defence Arrangement and mutual respect and transparency in strategic terms. I think the points have already been made substantiating why, in a military sense, they are here and how benefits will flow to both sides



in terms of that military arrangement.

**Mr Stanbridge**—But if their allegiance is not with us, it may be very detrimental in fact.

**CHAIRMAN**—These are the things that are all part and parcel of security, and they will be handled accordingly. That is all spelt out, in terms of security arrangements, very explicitly in this agreement. I am sorry, but there are others waiting and we are digressing into far wider fields. As much as I would like to sit here and argue or discuss some of these issues with you, today's is not the appropriate forum.

**Mr Stanbridge**—I think these things need to be kept in mind in a long-term view, for the safety of this nation.

**CHAIRMAN**—Okay, I understand that. Thank you very much.

[12.41 p.m.]

**CHAIRMAN**—Mr Marney, in what capacity are you appearing before the committee, and do you wish to make an opening statement?

**Mr Marney**—I have come here as a private citizen for a particular reason. But before I get on to that reason, I want to emphasise that I do not object to the stationing of these Singaporeans in Oakey. Being a pragmatist, I welcome the added income their presence will bring to this region and perhaps to Oakey in particular. Furthermore, I believe the daily intermingling of the Singaporeans and our people, civilians as well as military personnel, will have a beneficial effect in regard to mutual understanding and improved relationships between our peoples. That is my philosophical attitude.

I now come to my main reason for being here. Because what I have to say is a serious criticism of Mr Taylor, who already knows my views, I want to make it clear that I am directing these remarks to the other members of the committee. On 18 December last year, the region's daily newspaper *The Chronicle* published as its front-page lead a report headlined, 'Taylor warns off racists.' That headline referred to a warning by Mr Taylor that anyone fronting this hearing with negative feelings would be exposed for what they were. Mr Taylor was reported as saying:

My committee will expose them for what they are—down and out racists.

Had he been reacting to any news reports suggesting racist opposition to the stationing of Singaporean service personnel at Oakey, his outburst might have been understandable. But there was no published evidence of any such opposition.

In the following weeks, during which there were a number of letters in *The Chronicle* criticising Mr Taylor for this attitude, he did not challenge the accuracy of the newspaper's report. In my letter, published on 26 December, I stated:

In 50 years of practised observation of government, I've never before known, in a free country, of such an outrageous attack on free speech.

The most charitable interpretation of his statement is that he seems to think the only opposition to the presence of Singaporean servicemen in Australia would be out of anti-Asian sentiment. It seemingly has not crossed his mind that concern about this development could be based not on race per se but on the genuine belief that it is not in Australia's defence interests to have key members of a foreign country's armed forces stationed in this country.

By categorising people worried by the implications of this proposal as racists, even before hearing what they have to say, Mr Taylor compounds the offence of branding people (usually disgracefully inaccurately) as racist.

A person may correctly and justifiably be called "racist" only if he acts on the belief that he is racially superior to some other person.

I suggest to you that, from the committee's viewpoint, perhaps the most serious aspect of Mr Taylor's outburst was that he might have hindered the work of the committee by frightening

off people who could have contributed to the widest possible range of views on the matter under review. If people of this region who might have wished to submit views opposing the intergovernmental agreement have been deterred from doing so by this outburst, it will mean that Mr Taylor has contributed to the committee's obtaining a distorted picture of public opinion on this subject.

In a life-long career in all types of news media in Britain and Australia, with much of that experience focused on parliament and politics, I have never known of an instance where the chairman of a parliamentary committee has made a public statement which, even if unintentional, has had the potential of interfering with the purpose of that committee, and the objectives of the parliament that committee serves.

To make matters worse, it should be noted that Mr Taylor also publicly asserted—I would warrant without consulting his fellow committee members—that the committee would, in effect, sit in judgment on people coming before it and would expose them as 'down and out racists'. It is because of this that I have drawn the matter to the attention of the committee, posing the question that what Mr Taylor has done might well justify its being brought to the notice of the Privileges Committee for consideration.

I will offer a final footnote. I have seen the committee's own brochure on the subject. I refer to the section in *Appearing as a witness at a parliamentary committee hearing* headed 'Parliamentary privilege', and particularly to its last paragraph:

Additionally, persons who intimidate or threaten a witness or potential witness may be punished.

I would suggest, with all due respect, that that applies to what Mr Taylor had to say.

**CHAIRMAN**—Thank you, Mr Marney. You have added nothing to what you have already said in the media. If you wanted to take the opportunity today of having me as a whipping post, I am afraid you have picked the wrong occasion. As I have said, this is not the forum. You can make these comments as a very experienced—and, I have to say, a very good—journalist but you have misinterpreted what I said. I have already tried to explain in one letter and I am not going to respond any further publicly.

What I said at the time about this whole episode, and I repeated it this morning, was that if people wanted to come along to this committee to argue against the agreement on the basis of racist overtones, they deserved to be exposed. I repeat it: they do deserve that. You say, simply because you do not agree with Taylor, that it is wrong. You have gone way off beam on this one and this is not the occasion for it. Fine, we will accept this submission into the evidence. It is something that you have got every right to make. As for my colleagues, with due respect, some of these cuttings were sent to Canberra and to committee members anyhow when the remarks were made, so committee members would have been aware of what was being said.

You have made a basic assertion that is not based on the facts. Those facts were—and I repeat—that if people fronted up to this hearing that was scheduled to be held and they

wanted to argue against the stationing of Republic of Singapore Air Force personnel at Oakey, simply on the basis of their race and on racial overtones, they deserved to be exposed for what they were. They would be racist, and I repeat that. But if you want to come along to this scheduled hearing—as you would know about it from reading the Toowoomba *Chronicle* as I am sure you do every day because your letters are in there almost every day—you would see that, as I have said over intervening weeks on a number of occasions, the whole of this treaty-making process is to involve people like yourself.

We will listen to what you have to say. We will listen to your views. We may not, as a committee, agree with them but at least you have the right and you are able to apply—in practical terms—that basic freedom of speech which you have. You are exercising that freedom today. I have no difficulty with that because you have every right to do that but I just repeat to you, Bart, in all sincerity, that you have got it wrong.

**Mr Marney**—Have you finished, Mr Chairman?

**CHAIRMAN**—Yes, I have.

**Mr Marney**—First of all, I made it clear in my opening sentence that I was directing my remarks to the other members of the committee because you already knew my attitude on this subject. I might tell you, Mr Taylor, because you have taken the opportunity in your chairman's role to say that I have got it wrong, that you have opened up an argument and that you must expect me to respond. Now the truth of the matter, Mr Taylor,—and I emphasise the word `truth'—is that you had a fortnight or more in which to challenge the accuracy of that initial story which was the front-page lead, by God! You did not do so. Now you are claiming that you said something else.

The truth of the matter is that I work on fact. The fact is that front-page lead which says you warn that anybody coming before this committee with `negative feelings' will be exposed—without hearing what they have to say—for what they are: `down and out racists'. Now, anybody who comes here today might oppose this training proposal, not on the basis of race per se, but on any genuine belief that it is not in Australia's best interests—as against its defensive interests—to have foreign troops stationed on this soil. Yet, on the basis of what you said in that initial newspaper report of yours, they would be `exposed'. Incidentally, you chose to take it upon yourself to bring the committee members into it—when, I am sure, you had not discussed it with them—with those people before `my committee' exposed as `down and out racists'. That is the truth, no matter how you slide and slither trying to get away from it now.

**CHAIRMAN**—I do not slide and slither, Mr Marney.

**Mr Marney**—Yes, you do.

**CHAIRMAN**—I do not slide and slither, Mr Marney, and let me just make a point to you although I do not want this to become a slanging match—

**Mr Marney**—Well you would not stand a chance in a neutral—in an impartially chaired—debate.

**CHAIRMAN**—Oh, come on, come on.

**Mr Marney**—I would whip the daylights out of you.

**CHAIRMAN**—Oh, come on. All you do 24 hours a day is write letters to *The Chronicle*.

**Mr Marney**—That is not true.

**CHAIRMAN**—And the thing is that you must understand that, as a practising journalist, you have made errors in reporting things in the past, haven't you?

**Mr Marney**—I do not think so.

**CHAIRMAN**—Oh come on, come on.

**Mr Marney**—I said, 'I do not think so.'

**CHAIRMAN**—In fact, Andrew Williams, who did that interview, will confirm exactly what I said and I have reiterated that I do not—

**Mr Marney**—Are you saying that Andrew Williams had it wrong?

**CHAIRMAN**—Andrew Williams may not have reported the total interview. I mean, you do not report the total interview.

**Mr Marney**—Was that first report correct or not? That is the point.

**CHAIRMAN**—The report was not correct, no. The report was not correct in some areas.

**Mr Marney**—Why did you not come out and say so?

**CHAIRMAN**—Look, I am not going to, simply because Mr Marney comes along in his letter here and—

**Mr Marney**—But that is nothing to do with it.

**CHAIRMAN**—It is because, basically, I had no difficulty with the way it was written when it first came out but then you started with your usual sort of legalistic approach to some of these things—nitpicking at some of them. I mean by that that I do not respond to every

letter that Bart Marney writes to the Toowoomba *Chronicle* or, indeed, to things like Mr McSweeney writes.

**Mr Marney**—It wasn't to do with a response to a letter. You had a story that you are now claiming basically misreported you. If you had any sense at all, you would have realised that this made you appear to have put your foot in your mouth.

**CHAIRMAN**—No, I didn't think that—

**Mr Marney**—Now it is said to be quite wrong, and you think it is nitpicking that I am raising this matter with the committee. Well, I would not have come to the committee—to tell you the truth—because I did not come to make you a whipping boy, as you said. I came because I tried to go through the parliamentary process. I rang parliament to find out how I could bring this matter to the attention of the Privileges Committee myself.

**CHAIRMAN**—That is all right. That is your prerogative.

**Mr Marney**—Don't tell me about my prerogative.

**CHAIRMAN**—I am telling you; it is your prerogative.

**Mr Marney**—But the truth of the matter is that I contacted parliament to find out what the procedure was. I discovered that if parliament was not going to sit for a fortnight or more, I could find a parliamentarian to take my complaint to the Speaker. If the Speaker thought there was a prima facie case, he could put it before the committee. Unfortunately, I could not find a parliamentarian to do so, because of party politics and the like. There you are. I understand the point.

**Mr BARTLETT**—I would like to make the point that the whole reason for this committee is to take evidence and opinion from the public and to weigh that evidence in the recommendations that we make. In this hearing, as in many others, we come with an open mind—obviously with some background briefings and knowledge of the issue—to weigh the arguments and evidence put to us. This morning, we have had a whole range of evidence from different angles: strategic, military, economic, social, cultural, et cetera. It is our job to weigh that evidence. Where that evidence is substantiated, and supported by fact that we find convincing, we take that on board and we make an appropriate recommendation. When opinion is given that is not substantiated by fact—it is based on prejudice or preconceived ideas, or it is not substantiated sufficiently—we are inclined to discount that opinion.

However, in all of the hearings we listen to the evidence presented. We weigh that evidence. We look at the degree of substantiation and we make our recommendations appropriately. As a member of the committee, I have come here with an open mind to listen to what people are saying, and to weigh the evidence appropriately. That is what we have been doing this morning.

**Mr Marney**—I accept that and, indeed, that is the way it should be. As a result, I would think that you might be a bit resentful of the fact that all of you had been included—with the absent members of the committee—when Mr Taylor said that 'my committee' would expose them, if they come with 'negative feelings', for what they are—'down and out racists'.

**Mr BARTLETT**—I have no problems with anyone coming with negative feelings, as long as their arguments are based on fact.

**Mr Marney**—No, I am sure not. That is the right of all of us.

**Mr TRUSS**—But I take it that, in fact, your view is that the agreement should proceed?

**Mr Marney**—Exactly! I made that perfectly clear as my preamble.

**CHAIRMAN**—Thank you.

[12.58 p.m.]

**CHAIRMAN**—Would you like to make a short opening statement, and state in what capacity you appear?

**Mr Downey**—I am here as a private citizen and welcome the opportunity to speak to members of the committee. I am negative towards the establishment of the Republic of Singapore Air Force squadron at Oakey. But I would like to say, after Mr Marney's submission, a bit about my credentials. I was the first director of the Victorian Ministry of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs. I was the first director of the Department of Ethnic Affairs in Queensland and I am currently a consultant with the Ethnic Communities Council in Queensland. So I do not think anybody could classify me necessarily as a racist. I have nothing against the Singaporeans or any other nation. That is my opening statement.

**CHAIRMAN**—So you are arguing against it on the basis of other grounds? We need to hear what those other grounds are.

**Mr Downey**—I am arguing that on the basis that my main force in life is the defence of this nation, and the defence of this nation has nothing to do with the defence forces of other countries; that we have made a muck of our Department of Defence—the army, navy and air force. We have wasted great sums of money, and I have been for a long time pressing the government—the previous government and the current government—to do something about that.

I have been an advocate for the non-agreement to the stationing of defence forces of other countries in this nation, and that includes the Americans and the New Zealanders who have a Skyhawk squadron at Nowra. It includes the Skyhawk squadron here, the Singapore air force squadron at Amberley, and any activities by Indonesian troops or American troops in Tandem Thrust, or any other troops in this country.

The latest is that we are going to turn part of the desert of Australia into a bombing range, which is absolutely ridiculous from the point of view of the defence of this nation. We have no defence, as the CDF said in his statement carried in the *Weekend Australian* of 25 and 26 November 1995, as we cannot defend ourselves, which is an absolute indictment as to governments in the past.

I have heard this morning the economic rationalism of bringing people here and the benefits to the community. There are necessarily no benefits as far as I can see to the strategic situation, nor to the economic situation with respect to the Defence Force of Australia. I do not think very much other than personal relationships would come out of the stationing of the squadron at Oakey.

In 1994 the RAAF through the then government sought jet pilots for the air force, and



they sought pilots from Singapore. There was great to-do about that. They had to change their allegiance; they had to become Australian citizens to be pilots here. That, I guess, was my first foray into dialogue with the government, and it has continued since.

I have really had no satisfactory answers from the government as to why these things go along, other than for economic reasons or for justification. I heard a foreign affairs representative this morning saying how important Singapore was to the strategic position of Australia and this nation. We have only got to go back to 1942 when it was a hell of a strategic position. The whole defence of Australia up to 1942 was based on Singapore being a fortress state. It was not, and it fell, and we almost fell with it. So to argue on the basis of strategy, to argue on the basis of the economy of a small region, is fallacious as far as I am concerned. That is my statement.

**CHAIRMAN**—Thank you.

**Mr Downey**—I might just add that I have put forward to the previous government and to this government ways and means by which we can defend this country.

**CHAIRMAN**—Have you made a written submission?

**Mr Downey**—Not yet. No.

**CHAIRMAN**—I would invite you to put a written submission in on this. From some of the issues that you are raising you obviously have a detailed knowledge of the strategic situation in our country, and in the region, and we would be keen to hear about that. I think it is best that you do that in written format. We can inject that into the evidence; we would be pleased to do that.

**Mr TRUSS**—Do I take it that you believe that Australia is capable of defending itself against aggressors without allies?

**Mr Downey**—Yes.

**Mr TRUSS**—What variations would there have to be in the defence budget to achieve that objective?

**Mr Downey**—Initially, none.

**Mr TRUSS**—So with the current expenditure we are capable of defending ourselves against any aggressor or any potential aggressor?

**Mr Downey**—In due course. It would take some little lead time.

**Mr TRUSS**—And do we do that by being much better diplomats so that we never have any military disputes, or are you arguing that it is impossible to attack Australia for

geographical and other such reasons?

**Mr Downey**—No, not at all.

**Mr TRUSS**—I think you had better add this to your solution when you write it.

**Mr Downey**—Yes.

**CHAIRMAN**—Quite apart from the strategic points that were made by DFAT in their evidence—specifically the five power defence agreement in relation to Singapore, and everything that goes with the five power defence agreement—what about the concept of transparency? That is a very important strategic element. Surely aren't we, by doing things like having them here, enabling that transparency to be optimised? Isn't that a major step forward in strategic terms for Australia?

**Mr Downey**—No. I do not believe so. I don't think it matters a damn. The openness of Australian society is going to tell everybody what we have got, where we have got it. You have only got to pick up the *Australian Pacific Defence Reporter* on military balance—which landed in my mailbox yesterday—which indicates exactly where every unit of the Australian army is here, and how many there are. That sort of transparency is not helping.

**CHAIRMAN**—I am talking about transparency in a strategic sense, not down to specifics of how many tanks you have got in X and how many ships you have got in Y, that sort of thing.

**Mr Downey**—If I was the government I would tell them nothing and take them nowhere.

**CHAIRMAN**—Yes. That is one way of doing it. Again this is not altogether the forum in which to do this, but nevertheless there are other ways of skinning a cat. One way is to cooperate without being too cooperative in terms of the strategic dimension of our country and the defence of our country. The judgment made by governments of both persuasions, those on both sides of the political fence, is that this is the way to go. If you have got an alternative view and a solution, I am sure Ian McLachlan in particular would be delighted to hear what you have to say about it.

**Mr Downey**—I make the point that in 1923—maybe a little later than 1923 but certainly before 1930—General Monash, who died in 1931, and Brudenall White and Chauvel actually were asked to do a summation of what Australia's strategic situation was. Their statement was that Japan was going to be the enemy for Australia and that they would come through Malaya, as it then was, and Indonesia, which was then the Dutch East Indies. The government took no notice of that.

**CHAIRMAN**—Basically, without getting into too much detail because we are digressing a little bit from the Singapore agreement, are you arguing a fortress approach, are

you arguing a forward approach, are you arguing a—

**Mr Downey**—I am not sure whether I am arguing a fortress approach or a neutral approach.

**CHAIRMAN**—Neutral in terms of Switzerland—

**Mr Downey**—Australia being a neutral state, yes. I haven't quite made my mind up there. I think I'm probably heading in that direction, yes.

**Mr TRUSS**—The Swiss solution.

**Mr Downey**—Let us look at that. They can put 550,000 men in the field in 24 hours—armed and equipped.

**CHAIRMAN**—That is one option.

**Mr TRUSS**—I think you should put your proposal on paper, even if you are unable to achieve the deadline for this particular inquiry. If you have a well-developed proposal, it is something that we should look at.

**CHAIRMAN**—I can give you an assurance that if it comes to this committee that we will make sure it goes into others. I am Chairman of the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Trade. We will make sure it goes to ministerial level to let them have a look at it. If Mr Downey has the magic solution, then—

**Mr Downey**—It requires a lot of will on the part of the government to make some changes.

**CHAIRMAN**—I see. We would be delighted and very pleased to receive some sort of written submission.

**Mr Downey**—I still believe that all the foreign troops should leave the country.

**CHAIRMAN**—Okay. Thank you very much indeed.

[1.10 p.m.]

**CHAIRMAN**—Welcome. Do you wish to make a short opening statement before we ask some questions?

**Mr McSweeney**—Yes, Mr Chairman; I would. I had envisaged simply making a statement, but I am quite happy to answer questions, of course. Firstly, I would like to thank you and the other people involved for the opportunity to speak here today. I would also like to say the I endorse most of what Mr Marney said about your report. I would just like to qualify what I have previously said in my article in the *Kilcoy Sentinel*, where I suggested that you considered us all stupid, in as much as you said that the agreement had been signed in October but we are here today for input into the treaty making process. I withdraw that. Obviously, you think that we are all omniscient, in as much as nobody whom I have spoken to is aware that, once a treaty is signed by both governments, there are further procedural matters. I think you referred to it as being signed on 1 April.

**CHAIRMAN**—Thank you for that. You have made a very valid point. I am not being critical of Australians, because the system has not allowed this to happen in the past, but the ordinary person in the street has a conception of the treaty making process, some of which is correct and some of which is wrong. I guess it is like everything in life. As the incoming government—and we also made this point when in opposition—we felt that some of these misconceptions had to be corrected. We said that people were not being consulted in the process—bearing in mind that the treaty making capacity rests with the executive, under the constitution. Like it or not, the constitution really says that it rests with the executive.

To get that executive and parliament balance—bearing in mind you have got the judiciary, the executive and the parliament as the three divisions of power—and to get that in some sort of focus, we decided as a government to have the revised treaty making process. It was decided that this particular committee, the parliamentary committee, would be involved between the signature process and the ratification process. Perhaps you heard me say this before, but I will repeat it: the signature indicates a moral intent; that is all it does. But you do not get to the signature stage unless you have a very strong moral intent of doing whatever it is. The ratification is where it becomes accepted within international law. It basically is accepted as international law. Where we are involved is in between those two.

I am the first to admit that this committee has found the time scale pretty short, in that it has been specified that, once it is tabled, we have got 15 sitting days—and I emphasise sitting days—in which we have to review and recommend to the parliament whether we ratify it. In some cases, that is a very short fuse, depending on how the sitting patterns are. If we were doing one and, for example, there was a tabling towards the end of June and we were not sitting for July-August, we probably would not have to report back to the parliament until some time in September. That gives us a long fuse.

In this case, we have been given a relatively short fuse, even though a lot has been carried on beforehand, such as consultation with departments and consultation with the Singaporean defence force. We are moving to involve people like yourself. You have never before been able to come before a parliamentary committee like this and say your piece, and that has to be a step forward. It is an iterative process, and we may well be able to enhance it in due course. The government has said that, after two years experience, we will look at it again.

I welcome your coming along today. I do not want to go over the ground that Bart Marney and I went over, and I regret doing that in a public forum. But you have accepted that article without really consulting me. I read the article when Peter Slipper sent it to me. I was aware of the article, but I put it away because I thought it was inconsequential, because it was wrong. It is your prerogative to make that point.

The journalist who did the interview is sitting in the room now, and I will repeat what I said. Please do not think I am in any way being disrespectful to you. I said, 'If people want to come to my committee and argue against this simply on the basis of race or racial overtones, then they will be exposed for what they are: downright racist.' That is what I said. That has been taken out of context, with Bart Marney talking about flying in the face of free speech, and all the rest of it. I have re-emphasised in intervening weeks that this committee is all about freedom of speech. That is why you are here today, and that is why you have every opportunity to make comments.

**Mr McSweeney**—If I could make a little aside, I would be interested to discuss with you what racism is, because the antidiscrimination commission in Sydney could not tell me.

**Mr TRUSS**—Could I throw in one additional comment on a matter that was raised by the chairman? In the event of this committee facing major issues which it cannot deal with in the 15 days, we have the capacity to go to the minister and say, 'We want more time.' In fact, there is one treaty that we are working on at the present time on desertification, which I think was signed two years ago. We are still working on that report, and it is going to take some time yet.

**Mr McSweeney**—In 1959, the 14th session of the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted a principle of 'complete and general disarmament under effective international control.' This proposal and those words were put to the United Nations by Mr Khrushchev, the USSR President. You will remember that Mr Khrushchev was the man who took his shoe off in the United Nations, belted the table and said to the Western representatives, 'We will eat you!' So, he was all in favour of disarmament.

Those exact same words are part of the ALP platform. On 2 October last year, the *Australian* carried a report of Mr Downer in New York saying to the United Nations:

'At present a window of opportunity in arms control is open. If we do not take it soon, it will close. Large . . . nuclear and conventional arsenals continue to exist.'

He urged the United Nations members 'to take advantage of an historic opportunity to promote global disarmament.' So, I think it is fair to say that all the major political parties in Australia stand for disarmament. I find it incredible to hear fairly senior members of the defence force and, of course, in Canberra they are very senior members, going along with a program to train foreign services in Australia when that proposal is put forward by political parties which stand for the complete and general disarmament of Australia under effective international control.

During the early stages of the so-called gun debate, the Queensland Minister For Primary Industries, Mr Perrett, was asked whether Australia had signed the convention on the elimination of discrimination against women because that treaty incorporates in the preamble a reference to, 'effective though general and complete disarmament'. Mr Perrett said in the local newspaper in Kilcoy, in effect, 'Don't worry about that, that's only the armed services.' Here are our politicians of all parties saying that we should be generally and completely disarmed. I am sorry I cannot quote it exactly but in the Australian Constitution the federal government is committed to provide for the defence of Australia. I do not see it how it will.

A *Courier-Mail* article on 2 January 1997 explained that over 1,200 foreign troops were presently training in Australia, not counting those several hundred who are here full-time, which I presume probably meant permanently. Included in those troops are communist Chinese officers whom Australia is training. I find that incredible.

We have heard a great deal today about the financial flow-on of the proposal to have the Singaporeans here. Mr Taylor said in the newspaper something about a \$10 million deal, which was not very clear, but it does not matter because I would like to point out that your government, every day of the year, gives away about \$4 million in foreign aid, and that is only one way my taxes are given to foreign countries.

You said earlier today, Mr Taylor, that the committee was here partly to hear all points of view on this matter. If this treaty is going to be signed on 1 April, which is how I understood your comment, one wonders why you are bothering. If it is all organised and going to be signed on a given date, I wonder why I am here today.

**CHAIRMAN**—That was not my comment. That was a comment from the Department of Defence people in terms of the implementing agreement, which is the detail.

**Mr McSweeney**—My apologies. There is one question I have not heard asked and, as far as I know, it is not resolved. These servicemen are in Australia for not longer than three years, as I understand it. Will their children who are born in Australia become Australian citizens?

**CHAIRMAN**—No.

**Mr McSweeney**—Thank you. I have an article of mine which was published in the Kilcoy *Sentinel*—I am unpaid columnist. I do not have it with me but I do have it in writing

that there is no copyright held over my articles. In fact, they are published in a number of other publications from time to time. I therefore request, if it is legally possible, to have this incorporated in my presentation today.

**CHAIRMAN**—We will note it as an exhibit to evidence which has been given. It is not incorporated in the *Hansard* record but it is listed as an exhibit. Technically, it is the same and we are happy to do that.

**Mr McSweeney**—I would like to make an observation. We heard from the earlier selected witnesses, if that is the term, a lot of evidence that the community does not have any hassles with this matter. I might move in a different area of the community to these gentlemen but I have heard a great deal about this matter. This article of yours was published in the Toowoomba *Chronicle*, which does not cover my area but I have put it around quite a lot and published comment on it in the paper. Either I am very much out of touch with the public reaction to it or these various other people who gave evidence are out of touch. One of the clerical gentlemen intimated that there is some concern about it. I believe that concern is much more widespread and more deeply seated than he expressed. That is all I have to say. Thank you for the opportunity to be here.

**CHAIRMAN**—With respect to the Catholic priest from Oakey, I think he was saying that there are some concerns generally and he did refer specifically to Aborigines and Aboriginal relationships. I think it would be fair to say that there are some reservations in some areas as to how relationships are working—whether they are good, bad or indifferent. I think that is the way he was putting it. All I can say to you is that, from my gut feeling and from my discussion with people around this area, and this is in the immediate area that is affected, there is a very positive response. But, that said, I acknowledge that there would be people who would share your views. But I would also say that people who share those views would be a very small percentage. That is a view they are entitled to have.

**Mr TRUSS**—Is it your view that the people of Kilcoy have a different view of this agreement from the evidence that you have heard today?

**Mr McSweeney**—I am sorry, I do not understand.

**Mr TRUSS**—I am asking you to confirm that it is your belief that the people of Kilcoy are opposed to this agreement.

**Mr McSweeney**—I have met a lot of people in Kilcoy and also in Brisbane. As I move around, I talk to people in supermarket queues or when they are having a cup of coffee or whatever. I would guess that 90 per cent share my views rather than support the proposal.

**Mr TRUSS**—What is the reason for their opposition?

**Mr McSweeney**—Partly the reasons I have expressed—some predominantly because of the disarmament of Australia which is in progress.

**Mr TRUSS**—Because of the misunderstanding that they have of a convention on women's rights?

**Mr McSweeney**—Not necessarily, but when people realise that our armed forces—or at least our army—is less in number than the New York police force they become concerned.

**Mr TRUSS**—Would you advocate then higher taxes to have a bigger defence force?

**Mr McSweeney**—No. I would advocate re-allocation of taxes. I would allocate spending that \$4 million a day, which we give to Communist China and Singapore and many other countries, on Australia.

**Mr TRUSS**—Do you think that would give us an adequate defence force to defend our country against all comers?

**Mr McSweeney**—No, I do not believe that we could adequately defend our country. There was a time when we cooperated with people with whom we had a great deal in common in our heritage, and if you wish to call me a racist that is fine but please spell it p-a-t-r-i-o-t.

**CHAIRMAN**—I read your article on that.

**Mr TRUSS**—But the Singaporeans are a part of the British Commonwealth of Nations.

**Mr McSweeney**—Yes. They have not a similar heritage to ours. Their culture is absolutely different. Might I add that I have worked in seven foreign countries. I have been called a racist in Thai—I am sorry, I have been called a wog worker in Thai, in French, in German, in Greek and in Arabic. I do not think I am narrow-minded. I suppose I am prejudiced—I am prejudiced in favour of my country, I am prejudiced in favour of my family and so on and so on, so I do not believe my views are narrowly based, but I am very concerned that the situation is pretty much now that if we were to be invaded, yes, we would need help. But I believe that help should come from America, for instance, rather than who knows where in Asia.



**Mr TRUSS**—You would not be looking for the help of the Singaporeans in the case of Australia being invaded?

**Mr McSweeney**—No. I cannot see why Singaporeans, unless their own country was threatened, would be bothered about defending Australia.

**Mr TRUSS**—But you think the United States would be bothered?

**Mr McSweeney**—Much more likely because they have done before. Let us say for their own reasons by all means; that is still defence.

**Mr TRUSS**—Okay.

**CHAIRMAN**—I would only make one comment about spelling racist p-a-t-r-i-o-t. I have served in uniform certainly a lot longer than anybody in this room, so I understand that word. I understand the word tradition, I understand about leadership and all the rest of it so I would hope that you are not going to put me in a group that in any way indicates that I am a traitor. That has been used in other forums in the last year. I am not a traitor and I have served my country in uniform for a long time. I understand, I think, as well as anybody, the strategic and defence needs of this country and the practical political wherewithal it takes to achieve that. I am not suggesting that we have the magic wand. I agree with some of what you are saying about our inadequacies in that area but I am not sure that you can then draw the long bow and say that simply by rejecting this agreement we are going to enhance the situation in any way. I think this is a step in the right direction in terms of transparency, cooperation and understanding.

The technological imbalance in defence terms between Australia and certain countries in the Asian region has been reduced. What we have to do here as a nation is to be able to make sure that that technological lead is maintained and what we lack in numbers we can make up for in technological and other terms. We have got to work at that. Some of what you are saying I agree with, some of what you are saying I have to say I disagree with, but nevertheless that is your right and I am pleased that you have come before the committee this morning.

**Mr McSweeney**—We are not going to convince each other.

**CHAIRMAN**—No, that is right, and that is our democratic right. Thank you very much.

Resolved (on motion by Mr Truss):

That this committee authorises publication of the transcript of the evidence given before it at public hearing this day.

**Committee adjourned at 1.35 p.m.**

