



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

# Official Committee Hansard

JOINT COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS

**Reference: RAAF Base Amberley redevelopment stage 2, Queensland**

FRIDAY, 9 SEPTEMBER 2005

BRISBANE

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**JOINT STATUTORY COMMITTEE ON  
PUBLIC WORKS**

**Friday, 9 September 2005**

**Members:** Mrs Moylan (*Chair*), Mr Brendan O'Connor (*Deputy Chair*), Senators Parry, Troeth and Wortley and Mr Forrest, Mr Jenkins, Mr Ripoll and Mr Wakelin

**Members in attendance:** Senators Parry and Troeth, and Mr Brendan O'Connor

**Terms of reference for the inquiry:**

To inquire into and report on:

RAAF Base Amberley redevelopment stage 2, Queensland

**WITNESSES**

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**Committee met at 11.34 am**

**BARTETZKO, Wing Commander Mark Oliver, Commanding Officer/Base Commander, Combat Support Unit, Amberley, Royal Australian Air Force**

**BUCHOLTZ, Group Captain Stephen Noel, Director, Multi Role Tanker Transport, Transition Team, Royal Australian Air Force**

**GREEN, Air Commodore Dennis Graham, Director General, Strategy and Planning, Royal Australian Air Force**

**HAMBLETON, Lieutenant Colonel Anthony Gerard, Commanding Officer, 9th Force Support Battalion, Army, Department of Defence**

**HUTCHINSON, Brigadier Peter John, Director General, Infrastructure Asset Development, Infrastructure Asset Development Branch, Department of Defence**

**PULLMAN, Mr Peter Harry, Project Manager/Contract Administrator, Amberley Stage 2 Redevelopment Project, Department of Defence**

**SHEPPARD, Mr Robert Sherman, Project Director, South Queensland, Infrastructure Asset Development Branch, Department of Defence**

**ACTING CHAIR (Mr Brendan O'Connor)**—I declare open this public meeting into RAAF base Amberley redevelopment stage 2 Queensland. This project was referred to the Public Works Committee on 23 June 2005 for consideration and report to parliament. In accordance with subsection 17(3) of the Public Works Committee Act 1969, which concerns the examination and reporting on a public work, the committee will have regard to:

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

Earlier this morning the committee received a confidential briefing from the Department of Defence, and we also inspected the site of the proposed works. The committee will now hear evidence from the Department of Defence and, after that, Ipswich Region Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

*Witnesses were then sworn or affirmed—*

**ACTING CHAIR**—Welcome and thank you for meeting with us today. The committee has received a statement of evidence and three supplementary submissions from the Department of Defence. These will be made available in a volume of submissions for the inquiry and are also available on the committee's web site. Does Defence wish to propose amendments to the submissions it has made to the committee?

**Brig. Hutchinson**—No.

**ACTING CHAIR**—I now invite a representative of the Department of Defence to make a brief opening statement, after which we will proceed to questions.

**Brig. Hutchinson**—This proposal seeks approval for the redevelopment of RAAF Base Amberley for the Department of Defence. RAAF Base Amberley's primary role is the home base for the precision strike element of air combat group. Defence's long-term planning provides for the retention of RAAF Base Amberley as a major defence base. This proposal comprises facilities works to ensure RAAF Base Amberley can operate effectively as a defence base over a 30-year planning horizon and includes, firstly, the provision of new working accommodation and infrastructure for the relocation of the Air Force's No. 33 Squadron. No. 33 Squadron currently performs the Air Force's air-to-air refuelling role using Boeing 707 aircraft. The squadron is an element of No. 84 Wing, that is part of Air Force's airlift group. No. 33 Squadron is currently located at RAAF Base Richmond in New South Wales, with other elements of the airlift group. No. 33 Squadron will be re-equipped with the multirole tanker transport aircraft due for delivery in 2008.

Five A330-200 air-to-air refuelling aircraft are to be supplied by European Aeronautic Defence and Space Construcciones Aeronaticas SA under a contract entered into by Defence in December 2004. As part of the introduction of the new MRTT aircraft, No. 33 Squadron will relocate to RAAF Base Amberley and the logistics management unit, LMU, and contractor support organisation, CSO, will be formed. The airfield at RAAF Richmond is inadequate for home basing the A330-200 aircraft. The runway length at RAAF Amberley is adequate for the MRTT to operate in accordance with the home base concept.

Secondly, the project proposes provision of new working accommodation infrastructure for the relocation of Army's 9th Force Support Battalion to RAAF Base Amberley. The 9FSB is a force support unit that provides the Australian Defence Force's strategic military heavy lift road transport capability. One of the battalion's key functions is to provide heavy lift vehicles to move armoured vehicles, heavy construction plant and bulk stores between bases and training areas. Additionally, 9th Force Support Battalion provides a technical and stockholding capability for stores required by deployed forces. The co-location of 9th Force Support Battalion subelements at RAAF Amberley will provide command and control benefits and position the battalion's transport assets in a location more geographically suited to their tasking.

Lastly, the proposal includes works to upgrade and refurbish the base's engineering services to support both the existing base facilities and the new works for the multirole tanker transport capability and 9th Force Support Battalion. The main engineering trunk services at Amberley are, for the most part, over 40 years old and require major upgrading and extension. The proposed works will provide a network of services and roads that meet the current needs and provide basic infrastructure to underpin the future development of the base. Defence has identified RAAF Base Amberley for long-term retention and development as a major base, and the upgrading of the engineering services is consistent with this future development.

The budget for the project is \$285.6 million. Defence also propose the delivery of an MRTT simulator facility as a turnkey project, estimated at an additional \$12 million. The scope of works for each of the project elements included in the \$285.6 million budget are as follows.



For the multirole tanker transport aircraft, the works include a new aircraft parking apron with aircraft wash point; a new squadron headquarters, maintenance complex and ground support equipment shelter; an extension to the hydrant refuelling system to reticulate fuel to the parking apron; upgrades to the main runway and the northern end of the Taxiway Bravo, a new facility for the logistics management unit; and a simulator facility to be delivered as a turnkey under the aircraft acquisition contract.

For the 9th Force Support Battalion, the scope of works includes a new battalion headquarters and logistics supply company office and stores building; a new office, stores and maintenance facility for 26 Transport Squadron; a new area fuel point and vehicle wash point; new offices and stores facility for 37th Force Support Company; and a petrol platoon complex.

For the engineering services, the scope of works includes upgrades to the electrical distribution central emergency power station and services supervisory systems; upgrades to the water supply, sewerage and stormwater systems; upgrades to the communications infrastructure; providing new link roads and upgrades to the existing road network; and landscaping works, including a wildlife corridor.

The budget includes professional design and management fees and charges, and construction costs, including furniture, fittings and equipment, together with appropriate allowances for contingency and escalation. Projects were foreshadowed as part of the 2004-05 Defence budget. Subject to parliamentary clearance, it is intended to commence the works in late 2005, with the works being completed by December 2007.

**ACTING CHAIR**—Thank you. On behalf of Judi Moylan, the chair, I apologise for her absence. She was unavoidably detained elsewhere. For the record, I thank the Department of Defence for providing in the confidential hearing a very detailed breakdown of the proposed costs. That certainly makes our job a lot easier and I think it also, on occasion at least, would remove the need for too many questions being asked of the department. I also thank the personnel involved in the very well-prepared inspection this morning. It makes it a lot easier when there is a well-planned inspection where there are proper displays, graphs and plans. Many members of this committee are new to this location and are not aware of many of the things here.

You finished, Brigadier, by explaining the time line. How realistic is that time line? The committee considers it to be a very big and important project. For the purposes of this question I am happy to assume a second stage commencement date of the latter half of this year, but how did you come to the December 2007 finishing time?

**Brig. Hutchinson**—As the committee saw in the in-confidence briefing, we have engaged an extensive range of consultants and contractors to assist us with the development of this very significant project to make sure that we get it right. We have very well-developed cost and project planning milestones incorporated into the overall project. Each of the three individual elements of the overall project—that is, the MRTT works, the base services infrastructure and the 9th Force Support Battalion projects—have had individual consultants or contractors engaged to assist us in developing both the plans for that area and the works programs for the delivery of those areas.

Within those plans, for example, we have engaged Leighton Contractors as the managing contractor for the development phase of the MRTT works—the most significant part cost wise of the overall project. The form of the managing contractor contract allows us, subject to the committee's clearance of the works, to rapidly engage that managing contractor, if they have performed well in the development phase, for the second phase of the works because we have already competed the overall project to ensure that we get value for money. Having a contractor engaged quickly—obviously there will be a negotiation process and all that sort of thing—in that area allows them then to subcontract their part of the works very quickly also.

The lead works of the MRTT project are largely civil works and we have a pretty good understanding of what the civil market is like out there. We are confident we are able to commence those works pretty quickly. That is also important from the overall contracting point of view because, as I mentioned in the in-confidence briefing, we are concerned about things such as the price of oil. To get a lot of those bulk works done early in the project helps us with the overall project time lines.

**ACTING CHAIR**—I appreciate the answer. You commented on a contractor that has been engaged to do works to date that may well at some point be contracted to do further works. I would not want the department to be putting it to us that it would be an expectation or assumption that it would occur. It may well be the case, and I do not want to prejudice any discussions that may arise, but clearly one of the most important things for the department to be doing is ensuring that there is a competitive process that will enable the best outcome so that Commonwealth expenditure is made in a proper manner. Can you comment on that, just to clarify any misapprehension I may have had from that earlier answer?

**Brig. Hutchinson**—We have assessed the risks of each of the three different projects and we have adopted a contracting methodology for each of the projects which best meets those risks. With the MRTT project, for example, we have had the contractor engaged for the planning phase. That gives us great confidence that, subject to the committee's agreement, the contractor's performance to date and further negotiations, we are able to achieve value for money for the Commonwealth in that project.

With the 9th Force Support Battalion project we have adopted a different contracting approach because that project is a greenfield site and we are able to fully design that greenfield site and go for a head contractor approach, which we think will give us better value for money. In that approach we have to go out and tender that next phase as a head contractor, again subject to the agreement of the committee. We have designed the third project but, because of the delivery methodology we are looking at, where this is an ongoing base and we have problems with opening up areas and still ensuring the operations of the base, we have decided that the best approach is to have a managing contractor. Subject to the committee's consideration, we will go with that approach, but it will take a little longer to engage contractors. So there is a different approach to each of the projects, based on the risks. Because of the approach that we have with the MRTT, we are able to start that element of the project, subject to the achievement of value for money and all those other issues, as you have mentioned.

**ACTING CHAIR**—Paragraph 33 of your statement of evidence effectively outlines the primary aim of the proposal. But the second sentence says:

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While other options were considered for home basing the Multi Role Tanker Transport, RAAF Base Amberley is considered to be the only viable location ...

I can understand, given some of the comments to date, why that may well be the case. Could someone outline what other options there were and whether they were comprehensive options or just rudimentary options.

**Brig. Hutchinson**—I will ask Air Commodore Green and Group Captain Bucholtz to help me in due course, but I will just give an overview. We considered a number of options for the home basing of the aircraft. Obviously, one of the first considerations is their current location at Richmond. However, Richmond was ruled out relatively early because of the physical limitations for the operation of the aircraft from Richmond. I would not like to go into the specifics of some of the ones we looked at, but we did look at a number of other options, which included commercial airfields. We looked at operating from a main commercial airfield, because this is a commercial aircraft. But that option was ruled out on a number of financial and operational grounds. If that is enough, perhaps we can leave it there. Otherwise I can ask Air Commodore Green to add something.

**ACTING CHAIR**—If there is anything that might be new and is not too sensitive, that could be added to the record.

**Air Cdre Green**—RAAF Amberley is probably one of the Air Force's jewels in terms of recruitment and retention of our people. So that makes this area a really attractive location for our personnel. When we were considering the options we started out by looking very closely at RAAF Richmond. The new tanker aircraft is about the size of a 747. It is a very large aircraft.

**ACTING CHAIR**—It is a bit bigger, isn't it?

**Air Cdre Green**—It is significantly bigger than the 707, which it replaces. Therefore, there were no suitable hangar facilities at Richmond for that sort of aircraft. The size and weight of the aircraft made Richmond airfield not suitable for the concept of operations. RAAF Amberley does provide that suitability, and that was a key driver for us in the selection of RAAF Base Amberley.

**ACTING CHAIR**—You have outlined why Richmond was not a goer—it was not a suitable location for that particular aircraft—but were there other suitable locations that at least may have been in the selection process?

**Air Cdre Green**—Certainly. You have got to look at what the role of the aircraft is. Its primary role is air-to-air refuelling of aircraft based at Amberley and Williamtown. So this location is very cost-efficient in terms of transit to perform those air-to-air refuelling functions. There were a number of other possible locations we considered, and the work that was done within Defence corporate support showed that this was the optimum location.

**Senator TROETH**—There are a number of questions I would like to ask, mainly about the removal of hazardous wastes and how you are going to go about that during the rebuilding project. What sort of hazardous waste is collected at the maintenance complex? I note that in your submission, at attachment 4, paragraph 8, you say:

The Complex has also been provided with an external hazardous waste collection point.

What sort of hazardous waste is collected and what are the procedures for its disposal?

**Brig. Hutchinson**—I will start off on that, but then I will pass across to Mr Pullman to expand on the answer. The base already has in place significant procedures for the handling of hazardous waste, and the works that we are performing here will meet all of the standards for hazardous waste collection and disposal. In general, a lot of the hazardous waste is material captured in the maintenance performed on the aircraft, but we also have in place some pretty sophisticated measures for capturing waste that might be, for example, spillage. With tanker transport aircraft, we are very cognisant of the fact that you could have some sort of an accident there with spillage of fuel and that sort of thing. So both in the MRTT facilities and in the facilities that we are building for 9th Force Support Battalion, there are facilities being built to store the tankers and the aircraft for the vehicle tankers to make sure that they have triple interceptor technology for capturing any spillages that might occur. We also look at the paved areas there and go into hazardous waste collection in a big way. I will ask Mr Pullman to expand on that.

**Mr Pullman**—I will talk mainly about the MRTT facility. There are trade waste issues over at 9FSB, but the measures I am going to talk about at the MRTT facility are very similar to those at 9FSB. The issues at the MRTT maintenance facility mainly refer to a fuel spill. I would just like to note that fuel tank work on the MRTT in the hangar is not done on a particularly frequent basis. On those rare occasions, the work activity is strictly controlled using appropriate personal protection equipment and procedures. The building services inside the hangar also allow for mechanical fuel vapour exhaust systems. If there is any trade waste generated, particularly a fuel spill, it is collected in sump areas, treated and then disposed of separately. It does not get moved into the sewage treatment area or anything like that. It is actually placed in triple interceptor traps and removed separately after being treated.

Certainly, all of the trade wastes are collected and treated in accordance with the design standards and regulations. The other areas of trade waste generation at 9FSB are the workshop and the area wash point, and again that trade waste is collected separately, treated and then removed from the site.

**Senator TROETH**—Is it removed off the site totally?

**Mr Pullman**—Correct.

**Brig. Hutchinson**—Just expanding on that, all drum trade waste is collected at a central point and removed for disposal under contract. Bulk liquid waste is held in tanks at the facilities where the waste is generated and is removed by tanker on an as-required basis, also under contract. Aircraft and machinery components that contain asbestos or other hazardous materials are similarly handled, and receipts are received at every stage of the process to certify that it has been handled in the appropriate way.

**Senator TROETH**—Good. I would also like to ask about building management systems, which you mention in paragraph 70 of your submission. You say:

Facilities will incorporate building management systems, metering and other provisions to measure and monitor energy use and to allow regular energy audits.

Could you explain the benefits of those building management systems? What other provisions will you be using to measure and monitor energy use?

**Brig. Hutchinson**—I will start off with that and then perhaps I will hand it to Mr Sheppard. I would like to table the Department of the Environment and Heritage's *Ecologically Sustainable Development Design Guide for Australian Government Buildings*, subject to the committee's concurrence.

**Senator TROETH**—Yes, thank you.

**Brig. Hutchinson**—I point out that we have complied with this design guide in our design development for all elements of this project. I think I have said to the committee previously that we are committed to ecologically sustainable development principles. In terms of the building management systems, we see that as being an important component of that ecologically sustainable development, because you cannot actually control and improve what you cannot measure. So that is an important component to build in at this early stage. It is a lot harder for us to retrofit later on. Perhaps I should hand over to Mr Sheppard to expand on it.

**Mr Sheppard**—Previously, bases have had only a single point of metering with the supply authority. We only have these meterings on buildings for our internal use. We want to know where our consumption is going, and we had no way of tracking that before. So all the new buildings that we put up now have a metering system so that we can monitor how much energy is being consumed by those buildings. It also comes with the load shedding. So, if there is a power failure here, we know how much energy each building needs so we can turn them off on a priority basis. So we work out which are our operational ones and our domestic ones, and we have a priority system for using our central emergency power system.

**Senator TROETH**—Good. In paragraph 67 you have said that, consistent with the aim to have 'capacity for future expansion', new mechanical plant should be 'modular to ensure flexibility'. Could you explain to us the benefits of modular mechanical plants? Will those plants be used as part of this proposed work?

**Brig. Hutchinson**—I will probably pass to Mr Pullman to expand on that. In terms of our expansion principle for the project, what we are doing is that, on all of our engineering services, we are sizing those services to take into account what the future capacity of the base may require. So, when we lay down the backbone services, we look at sizing the backbone to handle that future capability. By going for a modular approach, we are able to handle the capacity of a certain area of the base with that module and then to build other modules as we might expand the base, but drawing off a backbone capability which will then handle all of those additional modules. That is the sort of philosophy that we are adopting. Perhaps Mr Sheppard or Mr Pullman could expand on that.

**Mr Pullman**—In addition to what the brigadier has said, there is a requirement for us to design for expansion, particularly within buildings. As you can probably tell, there is a requirement for buildings to be able to be expanded due to increased numbers of people going in

there or a change of function or whatever. The designers provide space around the building to expand into. What does that actually mean? Not only does it mean that there is more gross floor area but it also means that there are additional services which are required. I am talking about airconditioning plant, electric services and the like.

In order to accomplish that—as the brigadier said—we anticipate for expansion by providing spare capacity. We also provide for increases in the numbers of cables for communications, so the conduits have spare space in them for extra cables. With the airconditioning plant, it is modular, as the brigadier said, and so additional capacity can be added to the plant in a modular form to expand on it to make provision for an expanded building. That is a fundamental design requirement.

**Senator TROETH**—With regard to the airconditioning, you said in your main submission in paragraph 73, ‘New facilities will generally be airconditioned’. Does that mean that not all of them will be airconditioned?

**Mr Pullman**—Where personnel are involved, there is airconditioning. There are quite a number of facilities out there, including things like vehicle shelters and the like. That was a fairly generic statement. Vehicle shelters are not airconditioned but personnel areas are airconditioned.

**Senator TROETH**—I take it that all the airconditioning systems to be used will be air cooled?

**Mr Sheppard**—We have a range of airconditioning systems. You can go into a mixed mode system so that you are not running the airconditioning all year long. In some parts of the year it is quite comfortable, so the airconditioning system just turns on to natural ventilation. It is only in the hotter or the cooler months of the year that you tend to use the system. Yes, they are air cooled rather than water cooled.

**Senator TROETH**—So there is no danger of legionnaire’s disease are anything like that?

**Mr Sheppard**—Yes.

**Senator TROETH**—Very good. I also wanted to ask you about the consultation that you have held with regard to this project. With all of it being on Commonwealth land, you are constructing on your own land. But is there any organisation in your list of organisations to be consulted that you have not had consultations with yet? You have listed them in paragraph 45.

**Mr Sheppard**—We have consulted with all the ones we have listed there.

**Senator TROETH**—Has there been any particular outcome? Is everyone happy? I know we are hearing from the Ipswich Region Chamber of Commerce and Industry in a minute. Are there any particular issues that have been raised in the consultations?

**Brig. Hutchinson**—As well as the project specific consultation that we have had, there are a number of other consultative forums that the base commander is involved with and that the department gets involved in, such as with the Queensland state government. As has been

previously mentioned, this is a growth area in south-east Queensland and we have looked to try and ensure that we are synchronised with those developments. As well as those organisations that are listed in paragraph 45, the project has also been discussed in a general Defence to Queensland government consultative forum. What is going on gets raised regularly at those sorts of forums. The base commander has extensive consultation. Perhaps I should ask him to expand on that.

**Senator TROETH**—I would be happy to hear that.

**Brig. Hutchinson**—We have a very positive relationship with the local community and with all of the agencies. As far as I am aware, every agency we have been engaged with has been positive about the project and what this will mean for the community. There is a real sense of working together at all levels of government and community, and a sense that this is a positive thing for the area. Perhaps the base commander could expand on that.

**Wing Cmdr Bartetzko**—Over the last couple of years we have established a RAAF Amberley strategic advisory group. The group involves representation from the Ipswich City Council—the mayor, local councillors, the CEO plus their development people—senior executives from the base, a representative from the Chamber of Commerce and some local industry members. Every two months we get together and discuss issues which are pertinent not only to the base and its future development but also to the region from Ipswich City Council's perspective. Obviously, their growth and our growth need to be closely aligned because, as the biggest employer in the region, what is good for us is also good for them. That relationship is very well established. We are heavily engaged with the local community in a lot of community activities as well as formally in the consultative group.

**Senator PARRY**—I want to go back to a matter I raised in the private hearing concerning the location of the MRTT facility, to get that on the public record. Can you satisfy the committee that comparisons have been done and the best location for the MRTT has been established, as proposed in the submission, taking into account the substantial stormwater movement there, the works that need to be undertaken and the reasons it cannot go further out with the 38 squadron area—the soft apron issues and the cost of upgrading or strengthening that particular facility?

**Brig. Hutchinson**—We looked at a number of options for the location of the MRTT works, in particular the aircraft parking apron. As you rightly point out, there is a large apron virtually adjacent to the location that we have chosen, and that is the 38 squadron apron. We also looked at locations at the other end of the Amberley Base but, for a number of reasons relating to spatial issues and costs, those options were ruled out. To make those other options work you would need extensive modifications to taxiways and so on to connect to them. Specifically, the 38 squadron apron is too soft for the MRTT aircraft and would need to be significantly strengthened. The taxiway to it would also need to be modified and strengthened. The real killer with that location was that it would need to be extended within the explosive ordnance safety distances. It was a combination of factors that ruled out those other locations, and we were left with the best location from the point of view of cost, constructability and all those other issues.

**Senator PARRY**—Thank you. I think it was important to get that from the private hearing into the public record. I want to address the issue of the electrical reticulation. When we did our tour this morning the new site for the substation was identified. One of the comments made was

that it would have 24-hour access by non-authorised personnel from a military perspective. Does that pose a security risk for the relocation? It is a substantial line item, as well.

**Brig. Hutchinson**—When we talk about access we are not talking about public access; we are talking about access for the electrical people, just as you would have at any other electrical substation throughout Australia. So it would have the normal security around it, but they do not actually have to go through an additional layer of base security to get access to that substation.

**Senator PARRY**—In the original submission, paragraph 78 indicated in part that none of the proposed sites for new facilities present any particular civil engineering problems. Then it goes on to mention geotechnical investigation. On our tour this morning we came across an issue to do with the water reticulation system going underneath the runway and from the main Ipswich road. Would you clarify what further investigations have been undertaken and whether that issue presents a future problem?

**Brig. Hutchinson**—I will lead off on that and then pass to Mr Sheppard. The particular site we were looking at today, which is the water reticulation or water supply to the base, is a function of the way the base was developed over time and a function of the history of where that water main came from. When we talk about there being no particular civil engineering problems, I guess what we are talking about is that it is a standard civil engineering problem, in that you have old pipes in the ground that are being stressed by vehicles or aircraft travelling over the top of them and that leads to a standard wear problem. We have done the investigations of that problem. We have also done extensive engineering investigations of the general services on the base to look at what we can retain and what we need to replace. Mr Sheppard can expand on that.

**Mr Sheppard**—The water line underneath the runway was obviously suitable when they built the runway there, but over a period of time it has deteriorated and has had a couple of failures in recent years. It is timely that this project has come along and it is going to divert that water main to the southern side of the airfield. At the same time Ipswich Water is going to bring in another water main, which will come in from the northern side of the airfield, so we will have a dual feed into the base. We have also done extensive surveys of the other water lines and the sewer lines underneath the base and, once again, we are rectifying all the worst conditioned. Instead of having a maintenance problem, we will just get in there and fix it up once and for all.

**Senator PARRY**—Can we just have for the record who is carrying out those investigations, who is responsible for that?

**Mr Pullman**—We have design consultants and a managing contractor on board. Both those organisations, the design agency and the managing contractor, bring on surveyors to undertake a topographical survey and geotechnical investigators to do soil tests and the like, as well as doing investigations of the underground services. That is part of their responsibility. Various design documents have been put together. As part of that design process, geotechnical surveys have been done and that is continuing, as we speak, to verify what we have found. Certainly there are civil engineering issues which we need to deal with, but they are not extraordinary. The geotechnical information has been valuable for the design work and is being done and verified as we speak.



**Senator PARRY**—Thank you. So, to sum up that suite of questions, you are satisfied that the statement under paragraph 78 still stands, bearing in mind the nature of the works you have just described?

**Brig. Hutchinson**—Yes. As I said, there are issues there but there is nothing extraordinary.

**Senator PARRY**—I want to move on to local impact. We have mentioned the consultation process, which I think is fantastic. Coming from a chamber of commerce background, I think it is great to integrate with your local chamber, so well done on that. What initiatives are Defence incorporating to minimise impact on the local community during the construction phase, which will be quite lengthy? Has that been discussed. It is probably a two-part question: firstly, what are the impacts and the way to alleviate them; and, secondly, has that been part of the consultation process?

**Brig. Hutchinson**—I will lead with the answer to this but I will also pass on to Mr Sheppard and ask the base commander to be prepared to talk about this as well. On the tour this morning, we pointed out that we have identified a separate access point for the construction traffic to come in. Obviously, with works of the extent that we are talking about, we will have extensive construction traffic accessing the base. We are trying to put in place plans which will minimise the impact of that construction traffic. That will involve both access and timing issues and so on to try to minimise the effect of it at peak times for the base.

As well as the traffic side of things there will obviously be the construction disruption for the working population within the base, which is why we have gone for the managing contractor approach in areas where we will need to cut services and those sorts of things. And there will be those sorts of issues which may have some effect on the immediate surrounds of the base as well, which have to do with the extensive amount of services works that we are doing. There will be those sorts of things. Perhaps Mr Sheppard can talk a bit more on the detail of it.

**Mr Sheppard**—As much as it is about the construction traffic, which is being handled, I think there are going to be a lot of positive benefits because of the cash flow that is going to go into the local economy. I think there are a lot of positives for the local economy from this. There are going to be a few minor disruptions during the construction period with the extra traffic flow, but that will be outweighed by the positives of the cash flow that is going to go to the local economy.

**Brig. Hutchinson**—I think your question, Senator, was more with regard to the impacts from the effects of construction on the locals—

**Senator PARRY**—I suppose that is a positive impact, and we should take the positive with the negative.

**Wing Cmdr Bartetzko**—We had a look at the construction traffic and the traffic flows around the area, predominantly from the Cunningham Highway to the construction site. The majority of the road is mainly used by the base population, so there will be more of an impact on the base population than on, say, the local community. With respect to local community impact, Amberley State School is obviously very close to where the construction site office and site works will be. We have talked to the contractors and they have agreed to bring the traffic in through the Southern Amberley Road and around to the construction site and back, and not up

Rosewood Road past the state school. So in that respect that will work—it will not conflict with the local school traffic.

We are also looking at having some traffic diverts around our child-care centre to make sure that the point of entry to it is not right next to the point of entry for the construction site. We are working through those issues. Next year, the highest road loading for the construction work will be in the May-June time frame; that is when they are looking at doing most of the overlay for the runway. We are looking at closing off one or two access points for the local traffic so we do not get the trucks—and they are talking about a truck past a point every two minutes—in conflict with the local community traffic. We will do that as well.

**Senator PARRY**—As a supplementary question from those answers, I have no doubt it has been considered, but is there any operational aspect here? Will our defence capability be reduced during the construction phase?

**Brig. Hutchinson**—Using the separate access point—and you would know this from the locations of the sites that we looked at today—we can avoid having to go past a lot of those operational areas. That will have more of an effect when we start to look at the base infrastructure project. But, again, we will look at programming that and using the managing contractor approach. That gives us a bit more flexibility in the way that we are able to do it. Because it will not be subject to prolongation and other issues with the head contract in that area we can balance the construction need and the operational need. That is a big part of the planning that we need to go through with our planning staff.

Perhaps I could also expand on the point that Mr Sheppard made on the economic benefits to the community. In the evidence I think our estimate was a construction work force of about 300 people on the project. The latest estimates that we have would indicate that that was probably conservative and that we are probably looking at more than 350 people employed across the three projects when they are all up and running.

**Senator PARRY**—That saves me asking a further question. Thank you.

**Air Cdre Green**—Can I add to one aspect of that. In terms of the operational capability, the plans have been worked so that we retain our full F111 and Caribou capabilities throughout the construction period.

**CHAIR**—Is there any concern about skill shortages in the area? You have mentioned that the project is proposed to be completed by the end of 2007. I am sure you have been provided with advice about a number of things, including market costs and the like. Has there been any concern about particular skills that may be lacking in the area for some of the tasks? Clearly this is a huge project in the area of infrastructure. Therefore, it would call upon a whole range of tradespeople, I imagine. Has the department had to consider that when speaking with prospective contactors at all?

**Brig. Hutchinson**—I think there is probably an extension to that. It is not just skills but also some of the materials and suppliers. There is an escalation across the board on those issues. I have already mentioned oil. Steel is another large component of this project. We have worked all of those factors into our planning. I can ask Mr Pullman to expand on it in a bit more detail if

you are actually after some specifics about what we think might be the key trades. For example, we are talking about steelworkers and sealing, petition and form workers. But I guess we are relatively confident because of the location here. It is much easier to find those skills in south-east Queensland—

**CHAIR**—Close to Brisbane.

**Brig. Hutchinson**—than it is to, say, find them in somewhere like Darwin—

**CHAIR**—A regional and remote area.

**Brig. Hutchinson**—or more remote localities. Of course, we are not that far from the Gold Coast. Even if you had a skills shortage here, I am sure that there would probably be people from elsewhere in Australia who could be readily attracted if we were not able to meet it from here.

**CHAIR**—Paragraph 43 of your statement of evidence, the section headed, ‘Longer-term planning’ says:

The further redevelopment of RAAF Base Amberley is included in Defence’s unapproved Major Capital Facilities program for consideration later this decade.

What further development or redevelopment is being anticipated by the department? Do you have any idea? Clearly, you have foreshadowed the likelihood of something beyond this project. What would be likely to be considered? Is that reaching too far?

**Brig. Hutchinson**—I do not think I could go into specifics at this stage other than to say that we are planning a RAAF Amberley base redevelopment stage 3. Clearly, that is still subject to—

**Senator PARRY**—To stage 2!

**Brig. Hutchinson**—departmental and government consideration and everything else.

**CHAIR**—I am glad to hear it!

**Brig. Hutchinson**—As you suggested, that is still a little way off. But as you went around the base today, you would have noticed that there were a number of tired buildings and so on which are not part of this proposal. This proposal is specifically looking at the in-ground stuff and new capabilities. It is not looking at rectifying a lot of that stuff above the ground that you saw today, which is looking a bit tired.

**CHAIR**—It will look more tired in about a decade, I imagine.

**Brig. Hutchinson**—That is right. We are looking at all of those issues, but it is too early to say what could come then because that will all go into the mix.

**CHAIR**—I think we may have exhausted the questions we have for you at this point. Thank you for your statements and answers to our questions.

[12.30 pm]

**RUSSELL, Mr Anthony Robert, Immediate Past President, Ipswich Region Chamber of Commerce and Industry**

**ACTING CHAIR**—Welcome, and thank you for meeting with us today.

*Witness was then sworn or affirmed—*

**ACTING CHAIR**—Do you have any comments to make on the capacity in which you appear?

**Mr Russell**—When we put the submission in, I was actually the president, but we had an AGM between then and now, so I am the immediate past president. The Ipswich Region Chamber of Commerce and Industry represents the business community in this region. It has a membership of in excess of 270 corporations. Next year will be the centenary—I have not been there for the whole 100 years, I must say, just to clear that fact up—but it has certainly had a long established and strong business relationship in this region.

**ACTING CHAIR**—The committee has received a submission from you. The submission will be made available in a volume of submissions to the inquiry. It is also available on our web site. Do you wish to propose any amendments to the submission?

**Mr Russell**—No, I do not. My role representing the Ipswich chamber of commerce here is really to give you an indication of the support that the Ipswich region chamber of commerce has for the Amberley RAAF base. It has had a relationship with the base over a number of years. The chamber and the business community certainly regard this as one of the major economic drivers in this region. For a long time the base has been supporting businesses in this area. That was the main reason for my presence today and my submission. Looking forward, we certainly do believe, in a business sense, in the economic benefits to this region a development like this would obviously have, and we would want to come out strongly in favour of that.

**ACTING CHAIR**—That comes across in the very brief but compelling submission that you made. You talked about the economic benefits that arise as a result of the base being located here, and of course the extra stage of development and the relocation of other personnel will only enhance that. If you can—I am not sure that you can scientifically do this—could you give us an idea of the extent and nature of the economic benefit and whether there are benefits other than economic as well?

**Mr Russell**—There are. I do not have any statistics to show what the benefits are. But, being a resident here and having children at the schools, I know that, on the educational side of it, the base personnel have now integrated well across the education system here. The RAAF procedure of having personnel outside of the base integrated within the dormitory suburbs provides not only an economic benefit but a tremendous social benefit too to those communities. In particular, it is good for the married service personnel to have their families integrating with civilians on a day-to-day basis. There is strong community support across the Ipswich region. It is one of the

great benefits, and one of the things we love about it here, that there is a very strong sense of community. That is also something I think we will see good benefits from.

**Senator PARRY**—I have one question. I would have been extremely surprised if the chamber of commerce had not supported the injection of Commonwealth funds—

**Mr Russell**—Absolutely.

**Senator PARRY**—but I do need to ask the question: have there been any negative comments directed towards the chamber for it to present to this hearing?

**Mr Russell**—We have not received any negative comments that I am aware of.

**Senator TROETH**—I do not have any questions. I am glad it presents such a rosy prospect for the Ipswich region generally.

**Mr Russell**—Keep in mind that I am under oath!

**ACTING CHAIR**—I will try to ask you a tricky question because it has all been too easy, really. Clearly there is a benefit and that is what you have been advocating this morning and in your submission, but are there any difficulties or potentially adverse consequences as a result of living near a base? Clearly, from your point of view, there is an overwhelming benefit, but are there any difficulties that may have to be considered?

**Mr Russell**—There are, I suppose. Nothing is perfect in this world. Something that springs to mind is increased traffic congestion and increases in the amount of working machinery. Those are the sort of things that might cause some disturbance for nearby areas of the region. Once again, the RAAF base does a very good job of communicating and letting people know what is happening and what is going forward. That is demonstrated by the Amberley strategic advisory group that is made up of the chamber, the base and the city council. We meet once every six weeks, I think. One of the aims of that is to make sure there are lines of communication. There are always going to be a few little things that will upset someone. You cannot please everyone all of the time, unfortunately.

**ACTING CHAIR**—So you are not aware of any bodies that have raised concerns? We are not. I do not think we have formally received any submissions in any way adverse to this proposal. I have to say that I thought, as a local community representative, you would certainly be aware of it if there were any vocal opposition.

**Mr Russell**—We are not. We do deal and associate with a wide range of different organisations—not only business ones but community ones as well. We have not come across any opposition. If we try to look for one, I suppose there is always a bit of a concern about noise from the airfields. That is something that is going to be part and parcel of a base of this nature.

**ACTING CHAIR**—There will be more air traffic, presumably, and larger aircraft.

**Mr Russell**—Yes. But, once again, I am sure there are management strategies put in place to make sure that that has the minimum effect.

**ACTING CHAIR**—As there are no further questions, thank you, Mr Russell, for turning up and giving us the chamber of commerce’s view of the proposed redevelopment and, indeed, of the base itself. There have been two other submissions, which were in writing. One was from the Australian Koala Foundation, who indicated that there has not been a particular study of any effects on koalas as a result of this proposal. The local council, who also did not wish to attend today, provided us with a submission indicating their support for the proposal and also indicating the high level of consultation that takes place between the base and other parties, including the council.

It is usual to recall departments when there has been a complaint or evidence that contradicts matters asserted by a department. We have not had that to date, so it is probably not likely that we will need to recall the department. That is the view of the members of the committee.

[12.39 am]

**PISASALE, Councillor Charles (Charlie) Francis, Elected Councillor, Ipswich City Council**

*Witness was then sworn or affirmed—*

**ACTING CHAIR**—Welcome. Do you have any comments to make on the capacity in which you appear?

**Councillor Pisasale**—I am the elected councillor for division 8—which includes RAAF Base Amberley—and I am very proud to be their representative.

**ACTING CHAIR**—It is good to see you here this afternoon. Do you wish to add anything to your submission, which is a two-page letter in support of the proposal?

**Councillor Pisasale**—Officers from our department brought to my attention the fact that they had lodged a submission. I went through the proposal and discussed it with our people, and I discussed it in depth with the mayor, Paul Pisasale. We as a city are very proud of the whole proposal and totally support it. I could certainly give you some other information regarding matters you have hit on and questions which you have raised, if you would like me to continue.

**Senator PARRY**—I have a simple question. As an elected representative in your community and particularly with this proposal being a part of your backyard, if you like, have you received any complaints about the proposal?

**Councillor Pisasale**—Not about the proposal. Generally, with RAAF Base Amberley, the beauty is that the wide protection zone or buffer zone protects the whole base. It works very well for the city. It is very similar to our racing precinct next door at Willowbank. It is the same model. Because you have that buffer and protection zone, the number of complaints you get are very minimal. The only time they really come to the surface is at times when, say, there are practices for an air show that is coming up. Last year is an example. But, again, my office—which is located in Leichhardt just over the hill—probably received about six complaints in total regarding all the preparation that was made for the air show. A very good question was asked previously: ‘What’s it feel like living close to an air base?’ I can answer with authority. I have lived in Leichhardt for 37 years and have seen that particular part of the suburb grow, but originally I could clearly see Base Amberley from my two-storey home, so that would have been a great exposure to the knowledge that you referred to. I am still living there; I have no intention of moving. I love the place.

**Senator TROETH**—I take it that the six complaints you did receive were about increased traffic or noise or something like that?

**Councillor Pisasale**—No. It was only the fact that the F111s were taking the tiles off some people’s roofs—or that was their perception.

**ACTING CHAIR**—Thank you for the cameo appearance this afternoon. We appreciate your presence here, representing the council and the community. Do you have anything else to say?

**Councillor Pisasale**—I would like to add a few things briefly about the consultations and meetings that we have. Some years ago, there was almost a wall blocking communication between RAAF Amberley and Ipswich City. There was no communication. The council pulverised the wall. We have set up some great interaction. We meet on a regular basis—every two months—and on other occasions as well. We look forward to opportunities to them having the key to the city. Any time that personnel from the base are represented within the city, the community show their support. Them standing on the side of the road and clapping their hands is a great gauge of how much they do appreciate RAAF Amberley.

**ACTING CHAIR**—Thank you, Councillor. Before closing, I thank the witnesses who appeared before the committee today and those people who assisted with our inspections, provided us with refreshments and prepared what were comprehensive reports for both the public hearing and the confidential hearing.

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

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

**Committee adjourned at 12.46 pm**