

Introduction

Referral of Work

- 1.1 On 25 March 2003 the proposal to provide facilities for the collocation and re-equipping of the 1st Aviation Regiment at Robertson Barracks, Darwin, NT was referred to the Public Works Committee for consideration and report to the Parliament in accordance with the provisions of the *Public Works Committee Act 1969* (the Act).¹ The proponent agency for this work is the Department of Defence (Defence).
- 1.2 The Hon Peter Slipper MP, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Finance and Administration, advised the House that the estimated cost of the proposed works was \$75 million. Mr Slipper stated that, subject to parliamentary approval, major design and construction would commence before the end of 2003 to allow occupation of key facilities by December 2004. Completion of all works is anticipated for mid 2005.

¹ Extract from the Votes and Proceedings of the House of Representatives, No. 85, Tuesday, 25 March 2003

Background

Armed Reconnaissance Helicopter Project

- 1.3 The acquisition of the *Tiger* armed reconnaissance helicopter represents a new capability for the Australian Defence Force. The aircraft is intended to replace the *Kiowa* light observation helicopter, which has been in service since 1971.
- 1.4 A total of 22 *Tiger* aircraft will be purchased under the Armed Reconnaissance Helicopter Project (Project AIR87), 17 of which will be operated by the 1st Aviation Regiment.²

Site of the Proposed Work

- 1.5 Robertson Barracks occupies an area of some 700 ha in the Litchfield Shire, Northern Territory. The barracks are situated approximately 5 km north of Palmerston and some 20 km east of Darwin.
- 1.6 The proposed site for the 1st Aviation Regiment facilities lies in the northern sector of the barracks in an area zoned for 'training and future major unit development'.³

Inquiry Process

- 1.7 The Committee is required by the Act to consider public works over \$6 million⁴ and report to Parliament on:
- the purpose of the work and its suitability for that purpose;
 - the need for, or the advisability of, carrying out the work;
 - whether the money to be expended on the work is being spent in the most cost effective manner;
 - the amount of revenue the work will generate for the Commonwealth, if that is its purpose; and
 - the present and prospective public value of the work.⁵

2 Appendix C, Submission No. 1, paragraph 13

3 *ib id*, paragraph 26

4 *Public Works Committee Act 1969*, Part III, Section 18 (8).

5 *Public Works Committee Act 1969*, Part III, Section 17

- 1.8 The Committee called for submissions by advertising the inquiry in *The Australian* on Wednesday, 2 April 2003 and in the *Northern Territory News* on Saturday, 17 May 2003. The Committee also sought submissions from relevant government agencies, local government, private organisations and individuals, who may be materially affected by or have an interest in the proposed work. The Committee subsequently placed submissions and other information relating to the inquiry on its web site in order to encourage further public participation.

Inspections and Public Hearing

- 1.9 The Committee travelled to Darwin and conducted both terrestrial and aerial inspections of the site of the proposed works. A public hearing was held at the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly in Darwin on Tuesday, 8 July 2003.⁶

⁶ See Appendix D for the official Hansard transcript of the evidence taken by the Committee at the public hearing on Tuesday, 8 July 2003 in Darwin, NT.

