

## Introduction

### Referral of Work

- 1.1 On 16 February 2005 the proposal for the mid-life upgrade of the existing Chancery at the Australian High Commission, Singapore, 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).<sup>1</sup> The proponent agency for this work is the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT).
- 1.2 The Hon Dr Sharman Stone MP, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Finance and Administration, advised the House that the estimated cost of the proposed works was \$12.7 million. Subject to parliamentary approval, works are to commence in March 2006, and completed in the first half of 2007.

### Background

#### Australian Diplomatic Presence in Singapore

- 1.3 Singapore and Australia have a bilateral relationship based on political, defence, educational, trade, tourism, and Commonwealth links.<sup>2</sup> The Chancery was built in 1977 on land provided by the Singapore

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<sup>1</sup> Extract from the *Votes and Proceedings of the House of Representatives*, No. 17, Wednesday 16 February 2005

<sup>2</sup> Appendix C, Submission No. 1, paragraph 2.1

Government on a 99 year lease to April 2073. As per the leasehold title, use of the property is limited to a chancery building.

1.4 The Chancery building consists of:

- large central atrium;
- five levels of air conditioned office accommodation;
- basement parking for 41 cars; and
- roof level engineering services plant room.

Ancillary facilities include:

- a swimming pool and cabana social area;
- tennis court;
- squash court; and
- children's play area.<sup>3</sup>

1.5 The existing Chancery is tenanted by:

- DFAT;
- Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs (DIMIA);
- Austrade;
- Australian Federal Police (AFP);
- Invest Australia;
- the Singapore-Australia Chamber of Commerce; and
- Department of Defence.<sup>4</sup>

## The Site

1.6 The Chancery building, owned by the Australian Government, is located at 25 Napier Road Singapore, in the Orchard Road district, adjacent to the Singaporean Ministry of Foreign Affairs and close to the missions of the United States, Britain and China.<sup>5</sup>

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3 Appendix C, Submission No. 1, paragraph 2.4

4 *ibid*, paragraph 1.3

5 *ibid*, paragraph 2.3

## Inquiry Process

- 1.7 The Committee is required by the Act to consider public works over \$6 million<sup>6</sup> 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.<sup>7</sup>
- 1.8 The Committee called for submissions by advertising the inquiry in *The Canberra Times* on Saturday, 2 April 2005. 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.

## Public Hearing

- 1.9 Under the terms of the Act, the Committee may not convene at any place outside Australia and its external Territories. Where a public work is to be carried out outside Australian and its external Territories, the Committee:
- ...shall consider the work on the basis of plans, models and statements placed before it and of evidence (if any) taken by it.<sup>8</sup>
- 1.10 On 13 May 2005, the Committee received a briefing from DFAT officers on the scope and environs of the proposed works to be undertaken at the Singapore Chancery. This was followed by a public hearing held at Parliament House, Canberra<sup>9</sup>.

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

7 *ibid*, Section 17

8 *ibid*, Section 18B

9 See Appendix D for the official Hansard transcript of the evidence taken by the Committee at the public hearing on Friday, 13 May 2005 in Parliament House, Canberra

