

## **Summary of Reports and Government Responses**

- 3.1 The year 2003 was a very busy one for the Committee with sixteen reports addressing works to the value of \$547.225 million. A list of the reports tabled in 2003 is provided at Appendix A.
- 3.2 Summaries of the reports tabled during 2003 are given below, together with the Government response to each report.

### **Sixty-Sixth Annual Report**

- 3.3 In accordance with Section 16 of the Act, the Committee tabled its Sixty-sixth Annual Report on 19 March 2003. During 2002 the Committee presented two reports on projects with a total estimated cost of \$200.3 million.

## **Proposed Fit-out of New Leased Premises for the Bureau of Meteorology, 700 Collins Street, Docklands, Melbourne (First Report of 2003)**

- 3.4 The Committee's first report of 2003 presented findings and recommendations on the proposed fit-out of new purpose-built leased premises for the Bureau of Meteorology at Melbourne's newly-developed Docklands precinct.
- 3.5 The Bureau's move to new premises was necessitated by:
- the imminent expiry (on 31 March 2004) of the lease at the Bureau's premises at 150 Lonsdale Street; and
  - the inability of the Lonsdale Street premises to meet operational requirements beyond 2003.
- 3.6 The proposed works comprised an integrated fit-out tailored to meet the specific operational requirements of the Bureau and included:
- fit-out of a new Central Computing Facility;
  - general office fit-out including shared meal and ablutions areas, some white goods and furnishings;
  - supplementary electrical, mechanics, hydraulics and fire services to extend base-building provisions to the preferred layout;
  - security provisions, both physical and electronic; and
  - information technology fit-out.
- 3.7 The work was referred to the Committee on 11 December 2002 at an estimated cost of \$19.22 million. At the time of the hearing, this figure had increased to \$22.8 million and included all fit-out costs; consultancies and management fees; costs relating to the removal from and remediation of 150 Lonsdale Street; and a 5 per cent contingency allowance.
- 3.8 The following issues were raised during the Committee's inquiry into the proposed works:
- **Project Timing and Contingency Planning.** Having reviewed the Bureau's evidence, the Committee was concerned at the uncertainty surrounding the completion date for base-building construction. While a penalty clause in the contract between the Bureau and the property developers would cover the Bureau's costs if a delay in construction were to be occasioned by the developers, this would not be the case if the Bureau itself should be responsible for any delay.

- **Budget.** The Committee noted a degree of uncertainty surrounding a number of specific budget elements, which was greater than might be expected from a project soon to go out to tender.
- **Consultation Process.** The Committee observed that an impasse had been reached between the Bureau and industrial/staff organisations with regard to adequate and effective consultation on the proposed relocation and fit-out.

3.9 In view of these issues, the Committee recommended that the work proceed pending the fulfilment of the following recommendations:

- that the Bureau produce a formal contingency plan, complete with cost provisions and accommodation options, to come into effect in the event that relocation to 700 Collins Street could not occur by 31 March 2004;
- that the Bureau clarify in detail the budget for the proposed fit-out of 700 Collins Street, and that a copy of the revised budget be supplied to the Committee at the earliest opportunity; and
- that the Bureau establish a separate and formal mechanism to effect meaningful consultation with relevant staff and industrial organisations, with a view to resolving outstanding staff concerns relating to space allocation and parking at the proposed new premises.

3.10 The report was tabled in both houses on 26 March 2003.

## **Government Response**

3.11 The Government responded to the Committee's report by way of a motion moved in the House of Representatives on 27 March 2002 by the Honourable Peter Slipper MP that the works proceed at a cost of \$22.8 million. Mr Slipper added that the Bureau had accepted the recommendations made by the Committee.

## **Development of Off-base Housing for Defence at Adamstown, Newcastle, NSW (Second Report of 2003)**

3.12 The Committee's Second Report of 2003, tabled in both Houses of Parliament on 14 May 2003, presented findings and recommendations in relation to the proposed development of off-base housing for Defence personnel at Adamstown, a suburb of Newcastle, NSW. The proponent agency for this work was the Defence Housing Authority (DHA).

- 3.13 The work was referred to the House of Representatives by the Honourable Peter Slipper MP on 11 December 2002.
- 3.14 The DHA's main submission stated that the development was necessitated by:
- an anticipated growth in the demand for Defence homes in the Newcastle region, partially in response to the establishment at RAAF Base Williamtown of the new Airborne Early Warning and Control capability;<sup>1</sup>
  - the high level of rental allowance being paid to Defence personnel leasing homes on the private market; and
  - a shortage of DHA properties in the Newcastle city area.
- 3.15 The DHA proposal was intended to extend the range of housing options available to Defence personnel in the Newcastle area and comprised:
- 72 dwellings, comprising 60 four-bedroom detached residences and 12 three-bedroom townhouses;
  - one internal main road, with two entrances off Bruncker Road and two connecting internal roads and pedestrian links; and
  - associated infrastructure works including stormwater drainage, sewerage, communications, gas and electricity supply.
- 3.16 The total estimated cost of the proposed development was \$21.6 million. This figure, based on the preliminary town planning concept of 60 detached houses and 12 townhouses, represented an average cost of \$300,000 per dwelling.
- 3.17 Issues raised during the course of the inquiry included:
- **Traffic Impacts.** Residents' groups voiced concern that the proposed location of the development's access roads may adversely impact local traffic flow. Following the public hearing, the DHA investigated alternative access to the site, but concluded that the arrangement developed by its traffic consultants remained the best option.
  - **Retention of Mature Trees.** Local residents were unhappy that the proposal would necessitate the removal of mature trees from the development site. Subsequent to the hearing the DHA wrote to the Committee confirming that of the 84 mature trees on the site, 40 would be retained and that 100 new trees would be planted.

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1 Facilities for the Airborne Early Warning and Control Aircraft at RAAF Base Williamtown were the subject of the Committee's second report for 2002.

- **Soil Contamination Testing.** A soil survey appended to the DHA's main submission indicated that Polycyclic Aromatic Hydrocarbons (PHAs) exceeded guideline values at several sample locations at the site. The consultants attributed the PHAs to the presence of coal-tar bitumen seal and recommended that validation testing be undertaken following the removal of the bitumen. In supplementary written evidence to the Committee, the DHA stated that validation testing would be undertaken during the course of demolition work.
- **Community Consultation.** In written and oral evidence submitted to the Committee, community groups expressed dissatisfaction with the extent and outcome of the DHA's consultation process. DHA acknowledged the need to resolve outstanding issues of community concern and undertook to make available all relevant expert reports, as requested by residents' groups.
- **Proposed Open Space.** A number of issues were raised in relation to a landscaped open space planned for the development, which was intended to serve as a 'buffer zone' between residences and the adjacent golf course. Witnesses expressed concern that the proposed open area was not suitable for use as 'active' recreational space, and that it had the potential to be dangerous to residents due to the incursion of mis-hit golf balls. The DHA responded that Adamstown was well provided with parks and playing fields, and undertook to negotiate with the golf club to ensure protection from wayward golf balls.
- **Project Timing and Contingency Planning.** The Committee was concerned that uncertainty surrounding critical project dates – specifically, the expeditious approval of the Development Control Plan by the Newcastle City Council – may impact upon the overall cost of the project.
- **Project Costs and Feasibility.** Evidence provided by DHA during in-camera deliberations on project costs revealed a number of unresolved elements and omissions. The Committee requested that the DHA supply a complete and updated feasibility study showing, among other things, contingency and escalation allowances and expected percentage return.

3.18 In view of the issues raised, the Committee recommended that:

- the DHA in future ensure that there is adequate direct community consultation;

- the DHA continue to work closely with the Merewether Golf Club and the Newcastle City Council to ensure appropriate measures are taken to guarantee public safety;
- in future the Committee be provided in advance of the hearing with a full feasibility and contingency study including contingency provisions for time and cost delays; and
- that the proposed development of off-base housing for Defence at Adamstown, NSW, proceed at the estimated cost of \$21.6 million.

## Government Response

3.19 On 15 May 2003 the Government responded to the Committee's report by way of a motion moved in the House of Representatives by the Honourable Peter Slipper MP that the works proceed at a cost of \$21.6 million. Mr Slipper noted that the DHA had accepted the Committee's recommendations.

## Proposed Fit-out of New Leased Premises for the Australian Customs Service at Sydney International Terminal, Sydney, NSW (Third Report of 2003)

3.20 The proposal to fit-out new leased premises for the Australian Customs Service at Sydney International Airport, Sydney, NSW, was referred to the Public Works Committee on 25 March 2003 and formed the subject of the Committee's third report for that year. The proponent agency for this work was the Australian Customs Service (Customs).

3.21 The estimated cost of the work was \$13.409 million, or approximately \$1,000 per square metre.

3.22 The need for the work was driven by Customs' intention to consolidate its Sydney activities at a single location, and the operational benefits expected to arise from such consolidation. Further impetus for the relocation came from the imminent expiry in 2003 of the leases on Customs' two existing premises, the degenerating condition of its Link Road premises, and associated maintenance expenses.

3.23 Fit-out works to be carried out under the proposal included:

- integration of electrical, mechanical, security, communications, fire and hydraulic services into base-building works;

- fit-out of investigations evidence rooms, operation rooms and a control room to meet special Customs requirements; and
  - general office fit-out.
- 3.24 Customs expected rationalisation of accommodation to result in a number of operational and administrative benefits, specifically:
- cost efficiencies;
  - technological improvements in services;
  - infrastructure efficiencies;
  - opportunity to adapt base-building to Customs requirements;
  - enhanced corporate identification;
  - consolidation of public contact points;
  - efficiencies in work allocation and resource use;
  - improved access for clients; and
  - proximity to Customs' major operational facility at Sydney International Airport.
- 3.25 The Committee's inquiry into the proposed works highlighted the following issues:
- **Greenhouse Issues.** The Australian Greenhouse Office (AGO) made a submission detailing the relevant provisions of the Commonwealth Energy Policy. Customs met with the AGO prior to the public hearing and agreed that the AGO would have continuing involvement in the Sydney accommodation project, for the purpose of establishing a best-practice model of energy management for application in the development of future Commonwealth building projects.
  - **Changes to the Original Building Design.** At the public hearing, Customs described two significant alterations to the construction plan for the new building that had been instigated since the agency's evidence was submitted in March; namely, that the building would be reoriented to have a more northerly aspect; and have one, rather than three, central cores. Customs stated that these changes would have significant energy use benefits.
  - **Staff Consultation.** The Customs submission outlined a variety of staff consultation measures used during the planning phase of the project and reported that staff had raised several issues in relation to the new premises. These included: travel time and costs, parking, child care

facilities and access to food outlets. At the public hearing Customs elaborated on its efforts to address these issues.

- **Security.** In response to questions regarding security, Customs assured the Committee that its new premises would provide a high level of security and added that, as a law enforcement agency, Customs is well advanced in planning for counter-terrorism.
- **Costs.** When questioned by the Committee about the possibility of cost over-runs Customs expressed confidence that the budget would not be exceeded, as the fit-out would be designed to the cost plan, rather than costed upon completion.
- **Contingency Arrangements.** Customs described a number of measures that had been built into the project plan to mitigate against delay and was confident that the project would meet all completion deadlines.
- **Quality of Evidence.** The Committee congratulated Customs on the high quality of its submission, which greatly assisted the Committee in its deliberations.

3.26 Being satisfied with the evidence presented to it, the Committee recommended that the proposed fit-out of new leased premises for the Australian Customs Service at Sydney International Terminal, Sydney, NSW, proceed at the estimated cost of \$13.409 million. The report was tabled in the House of Representatives on 18 June 2003 and in the Senate on 19 June.

## Government Response

3.27 The expediency motion permitting the works to proceed was passed by the House of Representatives on 24 June 2003, on the motion of the Honourable Peter Slipper, MP.

## **Provision of Facilities for the Australian Capital Territory Multi User Depot, HMAS Harman, ACT (Fourth Report of 2003)**

3.28 The Committee's fourth report of 2003 addressed the proposal for provision of facilities for the ACT MUD at HMAS Harman, ACT at an estimated cost of \$13.5 million. The work was referred to the Committee on 25 March 2003, and the report tabled in both houses on 25 June 2003.



- 3.29 The proposed works were intended to provide improved accommodation, training and administrative facilities at HMAS Harman, ACT, for one RAAF Regular Unit and nine Reserve and Cadet units previously located at a number of sites throughout the ACT.
- 3.30 The need for the work was precipitated by:
- the imminent closure of RAAF Fairbairn in May 2004 and the need for units currently accommodated at Fairbairn to be relocated; and
  - the planned disposal in 2004-05 of the Werriwa Training Depot.
- 3.31 More generally, the MUD concept represents a more efficient use of Defence resources, as it maximises occupancy of shared facilities and allows for the provision of joint training and administrative services that may not otherwise be justifiable.
- 3.32 The scope of the proposal encompassed:
- working accommodation, including office accommodation and specialist training facilities;
  - shared training facilities such as lecture rooms, meeting/conference rooms and parade ground;
  - general and weapons storage facilities;
  - workshop facilities;
  - unit vehicle and specialist vehicle storage and maintenance facilities;
  - separate ablutions facilities for both Reserves and Cadets;
  - training areas;
  - overnight accommodation;
  - access to messing, gymnasium and medical aid facilities; and
  - parking areas.
- 3.33 Specific issues addressed by the Committee in relation to the work included:
- Changes to the Original Project Design. Two significant changes were made to the project between the time of referral and the date of the public hearing. These were: the decision to collocate the Cadet and Reserve precincts, and the provision of barracks-style accommodation for up to 120 Cadets. Defence stated that these changes represented better value for money, and assured the Committee that Defence's duty

of care would not be compromised as Cadets and Reservists would not use the facilities simultaneously.

- Compliance with the National Capital Plan. The National Capital Authority (NCA) submission expressed concern that the proposed development may impact upon Canberra Avenue, identified in the National Capital Plan as a “designated approach route” to the national capital. At the public hearing, NCA witnesses attested that this concern had been allayed following discussions with Defence.
- Consultation with the AGO. The Committee noted that Defence’s submission made no reference to consultation with the AGO. Defence explained that it intended to undertake such consultation.
- Costs. The Committee wished to know why the overall budget for the MUD project had remained unchanged, despite the addition of an accommodation element and the expansion of ablution facilities. Defence explained that savings in other areas had permitted the funding of additional project elements.

3.34 The Committee recommended that:

- Defence consult with the AGO to ensure certification of compliance of the proposed works with the relevant sections of the Commonwealth Energy Policy;
- Defence clarify in detail the budget for the proposed ablutions facilities, and that a copy of both the ablutions costs, and the revised budget costs for the project as a whole, be supplied to the Committee at the earliest opportunity; and
- that the proposed provision of facilities for the ACT MUD proceed at the estimated cost of \$13.5 million pending the satisfaction of the preceding recommendations.

## Government Response

3.35 The Government responded to the Committee’s report by means of an expediency motion passed in the House of Representatives on 26 June 2003. The Honourable Peter Slipper MP noted that Defence had accepted the Committee’s recommendations.

## Redevelopment of the Australian Institute of Sport, Bruce, ACT (Fifth Report of 2003)

- 3.36 The proposal to redevelop the Australian Institute of Sport (AIS) at Bruce, ACT was referred to the Committee for consideration and report on 25 March 2003. The proponent agency for this work was the Australian Sports Commission. The works were estimated to cost \$65.4 million.
- 3.37 The Commission submitted that the proposed works were necessary because:
- many of the training facilities were outdated;
  - much of the office and residential accommodation was substandard; and
  - the ad hoc nature of some past construction and refurbishment had decreased overall amenity and efficiency.
- 3.38 It was also intended that the proposed works would equip the Commission to deliver the Federal Government's ten-year plan for Australian Sport *Backing Australia's Sporting Ability – A More Active Australia*, which was announced in April 2001.
- 3.39 Works required to meet the Commission's objectives comprised:
- new residential, dining and study facilities for athletes;
  - an AIS Service Hub;
  - upgrade of technology and air-conditioning of training halls and the AIS Arena;
  - extension of the gymnastics hall;
  - new combat sports facility;
  - aquatic testing and training facility;
  - improvements to the existing pool complex;
  - new sports development and education centre;
  - modernisation of the Commission building;
  - upgrade of campus trunk engineering and support infrastructure as required;
  - associated demolition and landscaping works; and
  - improvements to the AIS Rowing Centre at Yarralumla, ACT.

- 3.40 Due to the urgent nature of the work element, the refurbishment of the AIS Rowing Centre, valued at \$0.5 million, was approved by the Committee as a separate medium work in March 2003.
- 3.41 The following issues were raised during the course of the inquiry:
- **Planning Considerations.** The AIS site is subject to both local and Commonwealth planning requirements as it constitutes National Land under the provisions of the National Capital Plan. At the time of the hearing, consultation between the Commission and the relevant planning bodies was progressing satisfactorily.
  - **Gungahlin Drive Extension.** The Committee questioned the Commission on the potential impact of any realignment of the proposed Gungahlin Drive extension. The Commission stated that project deadlines and costs may be affected, but did not believe that the impact would be significant overall.
  - **Local Building Industry.** The Committee wished to know how the increased demand placed upon the ACT building sector in the wake of the January bush fires might impact upon the redevelopment project. The Commission referred to newspaper reports which indicated that local industry had the capacity to meet the expected demand.
  - **Costs.** While generally satisfied with the evidence submitted by the Commission, the Committee requested more detailed costs for the athletes' accommodation, dining and recreational facilities. These figures were supplied to the Committee following the public hearing.
  - **Provision for People with Disabilities.** The Committee wished to ensure that the proposed works would make adequate provision for the disabled. The Commission stated that addressing this issue was a high priority.
  - **Greenhouse Issues.** The Commission assured the Committee that matters relating to greenhouse emissions and energy efficiency would be resolved in consultation with the AGO.
- 3.42 The Committee recommended that the proposed redevelopment of the AIS at Bruce, ACT proceed at the estimated cost of \$65.4 million.

## Government Response

- 3.43 The Government responded to the Committee's fifth report by means of an expediency motion in the House of Representatives on 21 August 2003, to the effect that the work should proceed. The Honourable Peter Slipper

noted that the Australian Sports Commission had accepted the recommendations of the Committee.

### **Provision of Facilities for the Collocation and Re-equipping of the 1<sup>st</sup> Aviation Regiment at Robertson Barracks, Darwin, NT (Sixth Report of 2003)**

- 3.44 The Committee's sixth report for 2003 addressed the provision of facilities for the collocation and re-equipping of the 1<sup>st</sup> Aviation Regiment at Robertson Barracks, Darwin, NT, at an estimated cost of \$75 million. The work was referred to the Committee on 25 March 2003. The proponent agency for the work was the Department of Defence.
- 3.45 The primary purpose of the proposed works was to support the introduction into service of 22 *Tiger* Armed Reconnaissance Helicopters, the acquisition of which represents a new capability for the Australian Defence Force.
- 3.46 Works required to meet Defence's objective included:
- 1<sup>st</sup> Aviation Regiment Headquarters facilities;
  - logistics precinct;
  - aircraft repair and maintenance workshop;
  - vehicles and stores repair and maintenance workshop;
  - hangars and shelters for 17 aircraft;
  - training facilities, including a flight simulator;
  - associated engineering services; and
  - living-in accommodation for 110 personnel.
- 3.47 The Committee's inquiry into the work focused on the following issues:
- **Air Traffic.** Submissions to the inquiry raised questions relating to air safety, airspace management – particularly in relation to civil aviation operations - and the environmental impact of the new reconnaissance aircraft. Written and verbal evidence received by the Committee demonstrated that Defence was aware of these issues and was working to address them.
  - **Codes and Standards.** The Committee wished to ensure that Defence would observe building codes and standards suited to the local climate

and cyclone conditions. Defence responded that it intended to comply with the Building Code of Australia (BCA), applicable local provisions and Defence requirements.

- **Capacity of Local Construction Industry.** The Committee asked whether the local construction industry had sufficient capacity to provide materials and labour for the project. Defence stated that some materials would have to be sourced outside the NT, but added that it was confident that local industry would be able to meet labour requirements.
- **Life Cycle Design.** The Committee wished to know what life cycle provisions would be incorporated into the works design to account for local climatic conditions. Defence cited local industry knowledge, use of resilient materials, durable plant and equipment and past experience as means by which life cycle concerns would be addressed.
- **Utilities.** Defence informed the Committee that it was engaged in discussions with local utilities companies regarding the modification and extension of services at Robertson Barracks, and that associated costs had been factored into the project budget.
- **Costs.** The Committee questioned Defence about the currency of its cost estimate and asked whether any additional costs may be incurred by the need to accommodate visiting *Black Hawk* aircraft. Defence assured the Committee that the estimate of \$75 million remained current and that facilities to accommodate *Black Hawk* had been included in the original estimate.

3.48 Having considered all the evidence, the Committee recommended that the proposed provision of facilities for the collocation and re-equipping of the 1<sup>st</sup> Aviation Regiment at Robertson Barracks, Darwin, NT, proceed at the estimated cost of \$75 million.

## Government Response

3.49 On 21 August 2003 the Honourable Peter Slipper MP moved in the House of Representatives that the works proceed at a cost of \$75 million. In moving the motion, Mr Slipper added that the Parliamentary Secretary for Defence was also a very strong supporter of the proposal.

## **RAAF Base Tindal Perimeter Security Fence, Katherine, NT (Seventh Report of 2003)**

- 3.50 The construction of a perimeter security fence at RAAF Base Tindal, near Katherine, NT formed the subject of the Committee's seventh report of 2003. The estimated cost of the work was \$9.25 million.
- 3.51 The work was referred to the Committee on 26 June 2002. Consideration of the work was delayed at the request of the referring agency so that the inspection and inquiry might be held concurrently with investigations into the new facilities for the 1<sup>st</sup> Aviation Regiment at Robertson Barracks in Darwin.
- 3.52 Defence identified three principle elements of the need for the proposed work:
- protection of property and capability;
  - prevention of injury claims; and
  - the inadequacy of existing fencing arrangements at RAAF Base Tindal.
- 3.53 The proposal before the Committee described the construction of an 'active' (alarmed) perimeter security fence, some 13.9 km in length. Specific works elements included:
- a weld-mesh security fence equipped with intruder detection systems and security cameras;
  - a standard cattle fence outside the security fence to prevent activation of the alarm by livestock;
  - a sealed, all-weather access road inside the fence;
  - a maintenance track/firebreak outside the fence;
  - a computerised control system; and
  - civil works, including culverts and drainage channels.
- 3.54 Issues addressed in the Committee's report on the work included:
- Codes, Standards and Policy Guidance. In response to questions from Committee members, Defence confirmed that the fence would be designed to comply with a raft of current Commonwealth standards, Defence policy guidelines and international security standards.
  - Construction Features. The Committee was assured that a maintenance program would be instigated to ensure the ongoing effectiveness of the completed fence.

- **Technological Features.** Defence described the benefits of combining both detection and surveillance technology in the fence design.
  - **Heritage Protection.** Evidence supplied to the Committee indicated the presence of five indigenous and one historical heritage site in the vicinity of the proposed fence alignment. Defence assured the Committee that none of these sites would be disturbed by the proposed fence construction.
  - **Consultation.** At the hearing, Defence confirmed that discussions had been held with all stakeholder bodies listed in its main submission.
  - **Access to the Civil Terminal.** The Committee was informed that changes to the proposed fence alignment had alleviated potential difficulties associated with public access to the civil terminal at Tindal, and that this had resolved concerns held by the Katherine Town Council.
  - **Expected Design Life.** The Committee requested that Defence supply details of the expected design life of the proposed security fence and its components. This information was forwarded to the Committee after the public hearing.
  - **Security of Areas Excluded from the Fence Alignment.** Committee members noted that some Base facilities remained outside the proposed fence line. Defence explained that these facilities were individually fenced and alarmed, and met all current security specifications
  - **Costs.** At the Committee's request, a detailed cost breakdown showing the impact of alterations to the original fence design and alignment was supplied subsequent to the hearing.
- 3.55 The Committee recommended that the proposed perimeter security fence at RAAF Base Tindal, Katherine, NT, proceed at the estimated cost of \$9.25 million.

## Government Response

- 3.56 The Government responded to the Committee's report by means of an expediency motion moved in the House of Representatives on 21 August 2003 by the Honourable Peter Slipper MP.



## **Construction of a New Chancery Building for the Australian High Commission at Colombo, Sri Lanka (Eighth Report of 2003)**

- 3.57 The proposal to construct a new chancery building in Colombo, Sri Lanka was referred to the Committee on 25 March 2003, at an estimated cost of \$11.19 million. This work, discussed in the Committee's eighth report for 2003, was proposed by DFaT.
- 3.58 DFaT submitted that the work was necessitated by the deterioration of the existing Australian chancery complex in Sri Lanka, which had been in use for over 40 years and no longer provided adequate space or amenity; nor did it meet minimum standards for security, occupational health and safety, and building services.
- 3.59 The proposed new chancery was described as a two-level building with a total floor space of 2,200 square metres. Work elements required to meet DFaT requirements comprised:
- security provisions;
  - sufficient space to meet the needs of current tenants and to permit future expansion;
  - pedestrian and vehicular access, including a separate controlled public entrance for Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs (DIMIA) clients;
  - a controlled parking area;
  - a services wing;
  - staff recreational facilities;
  - landscaped surrounds;
  - new engineering services; and
  - integrated building fit-out to tenants' specifications.
- 3.60 At the public hearing, the Committee questioned DFaT on the following issues:
- **Fire Control Measures.** DFaT explained that the building would be designed to ensure that egress points comply with prescribed travel distances and added that these points would be patrolled in the event of fire.

- **Flooding and Drainage.** The Committee questioned DFaT as to the implications of the proposed elevation of the building for water run-off to surrounding areas. DFaT responded that it intended to grade and sub-grade the site to local levels and that run-off would be channelled from the site by an existing storm-water drain
- **Future Expansion.** When questioned about the potential requirements for future expansion, DFaT responded that it did not anticipate any increase in current staff numbers at the Chancery, but that the building fit-out could be reconfigured to accommodate a modest increase in numbers, should the need arise.
- **Security.** In response to the Committee's questions relating to security, DFaT stated that the new building would incorporate the full range of physical security measures employed in all their overseas offices, and would also take cognisance of the local situation.
- **Building Codes and Standards.** DFaT confirmed that the project would comply fully with BCA requirements, or local or international standards where these were higher.
- **Energy Targets.** A submission from the AGO recommended that the proposed new Chancery should have a total energy consumption target of not more than 500MJ per annum. DFaT responded that its intention was to achieve or better this target.
- **Costs.** The Committee questioned DFaT on the costs associated with constructing a building in Sri Lanka to Australian standards. DFaT explained that the high level of expatriate supervision needed and Sri Lankan Value Added Tax were significant budget elements, and added that the requirement to import construction materials may negate any potential advantage offered by the exchange rate.

3.61 Having reviewed all the evidence, the Committee recommended that the proposed construction of a new Chancery building for the Australian High Commission, Colombo, Sri Lanka proceed at the estimated cost of \$11.19 million.

## Government Response

3.62 The Government responded to the Committee's report by way of a motion moved in the House of Representatives on 11 September 2003 by the Honourable Peter Slipper MP granting approval for the works to proceed.

## **Construction of a New Chancery, New Delhi, India (Ninth Report of 2003)**

- 3.63 The Committee's ninth report of 2003 presented findings and recommendations on the construction of a new Australian chancery in New Delhi, India. The work, estimated to cost \$24.62 million, was referred on 24 June 2003 on behalf of DFaT.
- 3.64 In its submission, DFaT stated that the existing chancery in New Delhi was 36 years old and no longer met the requirements of the post in terms of amenity, building services, security and space. In addition, the chancery and some of its outbuildings failed to comply with Commonwealth and local building standards, and generally did not reflect an appropriate image of Australia.
- 3.65 To remediate this situation, the DFaT proposed the following works:
- construction of new recreation facilities;
  - construction of interim office accommodation for tenant agencies;
  - demolition of the current chancery building and construction of new purpose-built facility;
  - demolition and refurbishment of existing parking and workshop facilities for use as service and storage areas;
  - construction of new accommodation units;
  - integrated building fit-out to tenants' specifications; and
  - associated services infrastructure and landscaping works.
- 3.66 In its report on the work, the Committee addressed the following issues:
- **Amendments to the Original Proposal.** At the commencement of the public hearing, DFaT informed the Committee that the new chancery building would be set back approximately 25 metres from the northern boundary of the compound perimeter, rather than the 15 metres stipulated in the original proposal. DFaT stated that the additional setback of the chancery would improve the long-term security of the building against possible terrorist attack.
  - **Security Provisions.** When questioned by the Committee on security arrangements, DFaT responded that the level of security planned for the temporary buildings was appropriate to the prevailing threat environment, and that increased security would be incorporated into

the permanent structure to accommodate any future deterioration of the safety level.

- **Fire Safety Measures.** DFaT assured the Committee that the proposed new building would be designed to comply with the requirements of both the *Occupational Health and Safety Act (Commonwealth Employment) 1991* and the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*.
- **Flood Mitigation.** While the location of the chancery is not prone to flooding, DFaT explained that, as a precautionary measure, the building would be elevated to accommodate a one-in-one-hundred-year flood event.
- **Air-conditioning.** Noting the difficulties experienced with heating and cooling at other overseas missions, the Committee wished to ensure that the air-conditioning installed in the new chancery would operate reliably under New Delhi's extreme climatic conditions, and that it would be of a type that would prevent the possible occurrence of Legionnaire's disease. DFaT stated its intention to install energy-efficient air-conditioning designed for high ambient temperatures, and added that the system would rely upon air-cooled chillers which do not provide a breeding habitat for the *Legionella bacillus*.
- **Energy Conservation Measures.** Having received a submission from the AGO, the Committee asked DFaT to explain how energy efficiency targets would be met in the new chancery. DFaT outlined a number of measures including solar-passive building orientation, the use of light-coloured cladding materials, and zoning of air-conditioning and lighting.
- **Materials and Finishes.** DFaT's submission outlined the agency's intention to use Australian materials and finishes where practical and cost-effective. At the hearing, DFaT explained that while the bulk of building materials would be sourced locally, Australian timbers and finishes would be used in public areas to reflect an Australian image.
- **Local Workforce.** As DFaT indicated that the majority of construction and fit-out works would be executed by Indian tradespeople, the Committee wished to know how DFaT would ensure construction to Australian standards. DFaT stated that this would be achieved through expatriate supervision.
- **Growth of the Chancery.** DFaT explained that the increased need for space at the chancery reflects the growth in staff numbers. DFaT added that space requirements for the new building had been calculated in consultation with tenant agencies.

- On-site Accommodation. The Committee asked DFaT to elaborate on the nature of accommodation at the chancery compound. DFaT responded that there were currently 19 residential units on site and that the new accommodation was being constructed at the request of tenant agencies, which had already signed pre-commitment leases on the properties.
- Costs. At a confidential briefing on costs, the Committee questioned DFaT on taxes and duties, fees and allowances, sundries and contracting arrangements.

3.67 The Committee made the following recommendations in relation to the proposal:

- that DFaT take care to ensure that the air-conditioning system installed at the New Delhi chancery is operationally effective, cost efficient and energy efficient and that the Department supply the Committee with technical details of the system when these become available; and
- that the proposed construction of a new chancery at New Delhi, India, proceed at the estimated cost of \$24.61 million.

## Government Response

3.68 On 18 September 2003, the Government responded to the Committee's report by way of a motion moved in the House of Representatives that the works proceed at a cost of \$24.6 million.

## Refurbishment of Staff Apartments, Australian Embassy Complex, Paris, France (Tenth Report of 2003)

3.69 The Committee's tenth report of 2003 addressed the refurbishment of staff apartments at the Australian Embassy Complex in Paris, France. This work, estimated to cost \$9.5 million, was referred for the Committee's consideration on 24 June 2003. The proponent agency for the work was DFaT.

3.70 DFaT's submission stated that, while the 29 apartments in the Paris complex had been well-maintained, they were over 25 years old and did not meet modern standards for lighting, power cabling and engineering services, occupational health and safety (OH&S) or building code requirements.

3.71 To address these shortcomings, DFaT proposed to:

- replace electrical and communications cabling and fittings;
- upgrade fire detection equipment;
- upgrade lighting and heating;
- install secondary glazing;
- refurbish bathrooms and toilets;
- replace door hardware and locks;
- refurbish kitchen exhaust systems;
- repair damaged concrete wall sections;
- repaint throughout; and
- generally upgrade joinery, veneers, finishes, tiles and wall surfaces.

3.72 At the public hearing, the Committee raised the following issues:

- **Prototype Apartment.** DFaT reported that a prototype apartment had been renovated as a quality model and had provided a sound basis for project costing.
- **Building Codes and Standards.** DFaT stated its intention that the refurbished apartments would comply with current building codes and OH&S legislation.
- **Energy Targets.** DFaT assured the Committee that the Parisian post was conscious of energy consumption and that the proposal would improve thermal insulation and include the replacement of all white goods with energy-efficient models.
- **Security Measures.** In response to the Committee's observation that the proposal included no comprehensive security upgrade, DFaT stated that current arrangements were appropriate to the prevailing threat environment.
- **Fire Safety Measures.** DFaT described a range of fire safety measures to be implemented in the apartment complex and added that these were backed up by established evacuation procedures.
- **Preservation of Architectural Integrity.** As the Australian Embassy Complex in Paris is considered to be a building of architectural significance, the Committee was concerned that the proposed refurbishment may impact upon the architectural integrity of the property. DFaT responded that the proposed works would not impact upon the exterior of the building, and that the interior works were designed to maintain the original style of the apartments.

- Costs. The Committee asked DFaT whether the rent derived from the apartments represented additional revenue for the agency. DFaT responded that the apartments were let at the local market rate, but that the monies thus derived were spent on administration and maintenance.

3.73 Having satisfied itself on these issues, the Committee recommended that the proposed refurbishment of staff apartments at the Australian Embassy Complex in Paris proceed at an estimated cost of \$9.5 million.

## Government Response

3.74 On 18 September 2003, the Government responded to the Committee's report by way of a motion moved in the House of Representatives that the works proceed at a cost of \$9.5 million.

## RAAF Base Richmond Reinvestment Project, Richmond, NSW (Eleventh Report of 2003)

3.75 The Committee's eleventh report of 2003 examined the RAAF Base Richmond Reinvestment Project. The project was proposed by Defence and was estimated to cost \$35 million.

3.76 On 30 July 2003, the House of Representatives being adjourned for a period exceeding one month, the work was referred by Order of the Administrator-in-Council, in accordance with Section 18 (4) of the Act.

3.77 The Defence submission stated that medium-term investment in facilities at RAAF Base Richmond was required in order to maintain operational capability until 2010, or until the long-term future of the base is decided. Generally, some base work areas are too small, inadequately equipped, poorly sited and under-serviced.

3.78 The Defence proposal comprised the following work elements:

- construction of a new combined headquarters complex for 36 and 37 Squadrons;
- construction of new, purpose-designed Mechanical Equipment Operation and Maintenance Section (MEOMS) facility;
- construction of an extension to the east side of 33 Squadron hangar;
- upgrade works to 36 and 37 Squadron hangars and workshops;
- upgrade and rationalisation of high voltage electricity reticulation;

- construction of new ablution facilities to service the western portion of the base; and
- upgrade and repair of the stormwater drainage system.

3.79 Issues raised during the Committee's investigation of the works were:

- Occupational Health and Safety. Having inspected the facilities to be addressed under the works proposal, the Committee wished to ensure that OH&S requirements would be met across the entire base. Defence assured the Committee that areas of the base not addressed under the reinvestment proposal would continue to be managed under existing OH&S initiatives.
- Fire Safety. Similarly, the Committee was concerned that appropriate fire safety measures should be employed across the base and not only in refurbished areas. Defence reiterated the importance placed on safety and remarked that the base has, among other measures, its own fire service.
- Comfort and Amenity. The Committee noted that, in some instances, work areas and associated ablutions/meal areas were to be located in separate buildings and were concerned for the safety and amenity of personnel moving between buildings. Defence responded that separate ablution blocks were common throughout the base and were, in some areas, a necessity for health reasons.
- Services Infrastructure. The Committee asked Defence if the ageing base services infrastructure would have the capacity to support the proposed development. Defence stated that, as the works were intended only to support current capability, no additional load on services was anticipated.
- Environmental Issues. At the public hearing questions were asked about the presence of asbestos at the base and stormwater management. Defence responded that it conducted regular asbestos audits of its properties and that any areas of concern were either remediated or identified by cautionary signage. Defence also acknowledged the importance of stormwater management to local government and stated that it would seek to address the issue under the works proposal.
- Heritage Issues. The Committee noted that proposed works would necessitate the destruction of three heritage-listed Bellman hangars. Defence undertook to continue consultation on the matter with the Australian Heritage Commission.



- **Consultation and Approvals.** Defence's main submission listed a number of federal, state and local government bodies that may be consulted during the development of the RAAF Base Richmond reinvestment works. The Committee wished to know whether the approval requirements of any of the authorities consulted might impact upon the project schedule. Defence responded that the only approval yet to be acquired was that of the federal parliament, through the processes of the PWC.
- **Involvement of Local Business.** The Committee received submissions highlighting the potential economic benefits of the reinvestment project for the Hawkesbury region. In view of this, the Committee sought assurance that local business would have the opportunity to tender and the capacity to execute the proposed works.
- **Living-in Accommodation.** Mr Kerry Bartlett MP submitted that transit and living-in accommodation at RAAF Base Richmond was in need of refurbishment. Defence explained that, while there was no immediate plan to construct or refurbish on-base accommodation at Richmond, it had commenced an Australia-wide study of its accommodation requirements.
- **Future of RAAF Base Richmond.** The Committee queried whether the proposed expenditure of \$35 million was appropriate, given that the future of RAAF Base Richmond is not guaranteed beyond 2010. Defence stressed that the reinvestment was necessary to maintain operational capability at least until 2010.

3.80 The Committee made the following recommendations in relation to the works proposal:

- that, in order to improve the comfort and amenity of personnel, a covered walkway be provided between the existing MEOMS fuel testing laboratory and the office building to be constructed under the reinvestment proposal;
- that a decision on the long-term future of RAAF Base Richmond be made as soon as possible, to ensure the most effective use of public funds; and
- that the proposed RAAF Base Richmond reinvestment project at Richmond, NSW, proceed at the estimated cost of \$35 million.

## Government Response

- 3.81 The government granted its approval of the proposed work by means of an expediency motion moved in the House of Representatives on 16 October 2003.

### **New Main Entrance at the Lucas Heights Science and Technology Centre, Lucas Heights, NSW (Twelfth Report of 2003)**

- 3.82 The proposal to construct a new main entrance at the Lucas Heights Science and Technology Centre (LHSTC), Lucas Heights, NSW was referred to the Public Works Committee on 24 June 2003. The project, estimated to cost \$10.366 million, formed the subject of the Committee's twelfth report of 2003. The proponent agency for this work was ANSTO.
- 3.83 According to ANSTO, the LHSTC required a new main entrance due to:
- the age and design of the buildings and gateway entry;
  - the need to integrate security functions;
  - safety issues relating to periodic traffic build-up on New Illawarra Road; and
  - the need for greater efficiency in processing the entry of staff and visitors.
- 3.84 Broadly, the ANSTO proposal to address these concerns comprised:
- construction of a new formal entry zone;
  - decommissioning of the existing entrance; and
  - construction of a new gatehouse zone.
- 3.85 Issues raised during the course of the inquiry included:
- **Planning and Design Concepts.** As ANSTO's submission did not contain plans for the design and construction of the proposed facilities, the Committee requested that the information be provided when available. ANSTO subsequently forwarded designs for the new gatehouse complex.
  - **Commissioning of the New Main Entrance Facility.** ANSTO assured the Committee that the new entrance would not be commissioned until

it was ready to accommodate all traffic and security operations without disruption.

- **Consultation.** At the public hearing ANSTO elaborated on its consultation with security agencies, nuclear regulatory bodies, the state traffic authority and employees.
- **Traffic Congestion of New Illawarra Road.** The Committee questioned ANSTO about the traffic problems occasioned by the existing entrance facilities and was assured that these would be adequately addressed under the new arrangements.
- **Improved Security.** Having been informed of a previous breach of security at the LHSTC, the Committee asked ANSTO whether the new entrance facilities and associated security enhancements would prevent unauthorised entry to the site. ANSTO responded that prevention of such breaches was a prime objective, and that mechanisms at the new main gate should prevent future breaches.
- **Environmental Concerns.** The Committee asked whether the works proposal had considered potential negative environmental impacts. ANSTO stated that while construction of the new gatehouse facility would result in some small localised impacts on soil and air quality, the agency would comply with all environmental management conditions determined during previous works at the site.
- **Costs and Public Accountability.** The Committee sought assurance that project costs would be properly scrutinised. ANSTO informed the Committee that its expenditure was subject to annual examination by both the Australian National Audit Office (ANAO) and the Senate Estimates process. Further, ANSTO stated that the general public could access relevant information on the agency's website.
- **Public Gatherings.** Part of the proposed works will occupy a grassed area at the LHSTC traditionally used for public gatherings. The Sutherland Shire Council expressed the hope that a similar space would be provided under the new arrangements.
- **Quality of Evidence.** The Committee expressed concern at the limited information provided by ANSTO in relation to project design and costs. Supplementary design and cost documents were supplied subsequent to the public hearing.

3.86 The Committee recommended that the proposed new main entrance facility at the LHSTC, Lucas Heights, NSW, proceed at the estimated cost of \$10.366 million.

## Government Response

- 3.87 The Government responded to the Committee's report by way of a motion moved in the House of Representatives on 27 November 2003 by the Honourable Peter Slipper MP to the effect that the works should proceed at the estimated cost of \$10.366 million.

### **Proposed Redevelopment of Radiopharmaceutical Building No. 23 at Lucas Heights, Sydney, NSW (Thirteenth Report of 2003)**

- 3.88 The Committee's fourteenth report of 2003 dealt with the proposed redevelopment of Radiopharmaceutical Building Number 23 at the LHSTC, Sydney, NSW. The work, estimated to cost \$17.9 million, was referred to the Committee for consideration and report on 24 June 2003.
- 3.89 The work, proposed by ANSTO, was deemed necessary as the age and ad hoc redevelopment of the building had rendered it incapable of meeting projected needs for radiopharmaceutical production.
- 3.90 Specific requirements to be addressed under the ANSTO proposal included:
- streamlining of production flow and materials handling;
  - increased production capacity to meet expected demand;
  - rectification of OH&S problems incurred by continued ad hoc development, aging infrastructure, inefficient work flow, lack of space and inadequate materials handling practices.
- 3.91 In order to meet these requirements, ANSTO intended that the works should encompass:
- modern chemistry laboratories;
  - service and instrumentation rooms;
  - production clean room facilities;
  - packaging and dispatch facilities;
  - stores and component wash bays;
  - modifications to existing microbiological and clean rooms, intermediates solutions preparation clean rooms and sterilisation room;
  - amenities and support facilities; and

- associated road works, parking bays, landscaping, engineering and communication services.
- 3.92 Two 'medium' works associated with this proposal, namely a ventilation upgrade at Building 23 estimated at \$4.95 million and the relocation of delay waste tanks at a cost of \$0.58 million, were approved by the Committee in August 2003, prior to the consideration of the redevelopment project. Prior approval of the latter work element was granted in order to ensure that the Building 23 extension would be completed in time for the commissioning of ANSTO's Replacement Research Reactor in 2005-06.
- 3.93 In its deliberations on the Building 23 redevelopment proposal, the Committee addressed the following issues:
- Need for the Extension. Having received evidence asserting that Australia's radiopharmaceutical production needs could be met by importation and hospital-based mini-cyclotrons, the Committee queried the need for the proposed Building 23 extension. ANSTO explained that importation would not be feasible in the long term and that the nuclear medicines produced by mini-cyclotrons were different to those supplied by ANSTO.
  - Environmental Issues. ANSTO informed the Committee that liquid wastes from Building 23 would be handled in accordance with a Trade Waste Agreement with Sydney Water Corporation and that airborne emissions would not increase as a result of the proposed works.
  - Energy Conservation Measures. ANSTO assured the Committee that it would consult with the AGO to ensure compliance with the provisions of the Commonwealth Energy Policy.
  - Occupational Health and Safety. ANSTO stated that the proposed works to Building 23 would significantly improve safety conditions for its workers.
  - Consultation. In response to criticism of its community consultation process, ANSTO said that information relating to the proposal would be made available to the public on its website.
  - Risk Management. The Committee invited ANSTO to comment upon its intentions with regard to risk management. ANSTO explained that it had in place extensive quality assurance and risk management processes.
  - Costs. ANSTO stated that a cost-benefit analysis of the project had revealed the proposal to be a good investment.

- 3.94 The Committee recommended that the proposed redevelopment of Radiopharmaceutical Building No. 23 at Lucas Heights, Sydney, NSW, proceed at the estimated cost of \$17.9 million.
- 3.95 The Government responded to the Committee's report by means of a motion approving the works, which was moved in the House of Representatives on 27 November 2003.

### **Development of Off-base Housing for Defence at Queanbeyan, NSW (Fourteenth Report of 2003)**

- 3.96 The proposal to develop off-base housing for Defence at Queanbeyan, NSW was referred to the Public Works Committee on 21 August 2003. The work, proposed by the DHA, was estimated to cost \$12 million and formed the subject of the Committee's fourteenth inquiry of 2003.
- 3.97 The need for the proposed development arises from three major factors:
- an anticipated increase in Defence personnel in the ACT region;
  - the inability of current housing levels to satisfy expected future requirements; and
  - the need for DHA to increase the proportion of DHA-managed housing stock.
- 3.98 The DHA proposal comprised construction of 33 detached dwellings and seven townhouses, and associated road works and services infrastructure. The DHA also proposed to excise the existing pitch and putt club house and associated car park (an area of some 1,900 square metres) from the development and to offer it for private sale to be developed as a child care centre.
- 3.99 The Committee addressed the following issues during the course of its investigations:
- Defence Housing Requirements. The Committee requested further information on the process by which the DHA estimates Defence housing requirements. DHA responded that its projected housing requirements are estimated on advice from Defence, who in turn derive the figures from planning exercises relating to the location of Defence units.
  - Proposed Child Care Facility. Committee members wished to know if the former pitch and putt club room would be suitable for conversion to

a child care centre, and whether access to the centre would be open to all local residents. DHA responded that if the premises should prove unsuitable, the land would be used for additional dwellings. As the proposal was still in the planning stages, access issues had not yet been determined.

- **Community Consultation.** The DHA was commended by Committee for its efforts to ensure community participation in the project through public meetings, newspaper articles, door-to-door visits and letter-box drops.
- **Traffic Management.** In response to concerns that motorists may use the main road through the development as a thoroughfare, the DHA reconfigured the lay-out of the site and commissioned a study to ensure that there would be no negative impact on local traffic flows.
- **Nature of the Development.** At the public hearing, the DHA assured the Committee that due consideration had been given to the density of the development, a mix of housing types, residents' amenity and integration into the wider Queanbeyan community.
- **Storm Water.** The Committee was informed that the DHA had undertaken to channel storm water run-off from the site to supplement irrigation at the adjacent race course.
- **Project Timing.** The DHA attested that its construction time-line took appropriate cognisance of the burden placed upon the local domestic construction sector by the bush fires, and assured the Committee that the necessary local government approval process was under way.

3.100 The Committee recommended that the proposed development of off-base housing for Defence at Queanbeyan, NSW, proceed at the estimated cost of \$12 million.

## **Government Response**

3.101 The Government formalised its approval of the DHA proposal by means of an expediency motion moved in the House of Representatives on 3 December 2003.

## **Proposed Respecified Christmas Island Immigration Reception and Processing Centre (Fifteenth Report of 2003)**

- 3.102 The Committee's fifteenth report of 2003 addressed the construction of a proposed IRPC on Christmas Island. The work was proposed by the DoFA at an estimated cost of \$197.7 million.
- 3.103 A similar proposal had been exempt from Committee scrutiny on 21 March 2002, on the grounds of urgency. On 19 June 2003, the Honourable Peter Slipper MP advised the House that, in the light of a significant reduction in the number of unauthorised boat arrivals since 2001, the government intended to commence a new, respecified IRPC project, entailing a less urgent time frame, a different delivery strategy and revised scope.
- 3.104 DoFA submitted that the proposed new Christmas Island IRPC would be purpose-built to provide non-punitive, secure accommodation for up to 800 persons subject to mandatory detention under the provisions of the *Migration Act 1958*.
- 3.105 The DoFA works proposal comprised:
- accommodation units;
  - medical centre;
  - reception, induction and administration facilities;
  - education services and facilities;
  - interview/conference rooms;
  - flexible use rooms;
  - active and passive recreation areas;
  - industrial and accommodation area laundries;
  - kitchen and dining facilities; and
  - storage facilities.
- 3.106 In the course of its investigations the Committee queried the following:
- **The Need for the Work.** Committee members queried the need for the work given the sharp decrease in the number of unauthorised boat arrivals since 2001. Agency witnesses explained, as that there was no way to predict future arrivals, the facility fulfilled the Government's wish to be prepared for any future increase in numbers.



- **Location.** Given the logistical difficulties associated with the construction and maintenance of such a facility on Christmas Island, members asked whether any alternative locations had been considered. DoFA responded that no alternative had been considered as the respecified IRPC would utilise the foundation works undertaken under the original IRPC proposal.
- **Previous Site Works.** The Committee asked a number of questions about expenditure on works undertaken under the original IRPC proposal and were subsequently provided with comprehensive costing information.
- **Transfer of Project Responsibility.** The Committee wished to know why, in February 2003, responsibility for the construction of the IRPC had been transferred from DIMIA to DoFA. DoFA explained that, as it had a history of delivering works projects using a conventional delivery strategy, it had assumed responsibility when the 'fast-track' delivery system was replaced by a more traditional methodology.
- **Accommodation.** The Committee questioned DoFA about the nature of the accommodation, particularly in relation to the use of 'management' accommodation.
- **Building Features.** At the hearing, the Committee sought clarification on several features of the proposed facility, including materials and finishes, air-conditioning, security measures and communications technology.
- **Environmental Issues.** The Committee was informed that the respecified IRPC works were exempt from the requirements of the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999. Notwithstanding this, DoFA assured the Committee of its intention to work closely with relevant agencies to ensure compliance of construction activities with environmental requirements.
- **Compliance with Relevant Guidelines and Legislation.** The Committee sought assurance that the works would also comply with building code requirements, the Commonwealth Energy Policy and international guidelines on the treatment of asylum-seekers.
- **Impact on Local Community.** The Committee was concerned to ensure that the works would maximise employment opportunities for the people of Christmas Island and that there would be no excessive demand placed upon local infrastructure and services.
- **Operational Issues.** The Committee questioned DoFA on operational aspects of the centre, including its potential for alternative use when

unoccupied. DoFA stated that the requirement to activate the facility quickly when required would make alternative use difficult.

- Consultation. DoFA assured the Committee that consultation would continue with relevant organisations on Christmas Island.

3.107 Having concluded its examination of the evidence, the Committee recommended:

- that DoFA continue to liaise with the Christmas Island Chamber of Commerce and other relevant organisations in relation to the issues raised in the Christmas Island Chamber of Commerce submission; and
- that the proposed respecified Christmas Island IRPC proceed at an estimated cost of \$197.7 million.

3.108 The Government responded to the Committee's report by way of a motion moved in the House of Representatives on 3 December 2003. In moving the motion, the Honourable Peter Slipper MP noted that the DoFA had accepted the recommendations made by the Committee.

### **Proposed Community Recreation Centre on Christmas Island (Sixteenth Report of 2003)**

3.109 The proposal to construct a new community recreation centre on Christmas Island was referred on 21 August 2003. This work, proposed by the Department of Transport and Regional Services (DoTaRS), was the subject of the Committee's sixteenth report for 2003. The work was estimated to cost \$8 million.

3.110 DoTaRS submitted that the work was required due to the inadequacy of existing facilities and an anticipated increase in the island's population.

3.111 The works e proposed by DoTaRS comprised:

- lobby/ foyer;
- reception;
- staff administration offices;
- kitchen/ kiosk;
- public toilets, change rooms and staff toilets;
- crèche and child-minding facilities;
- a multi-purpose sports hall for netball, volleyball, basketball;

- equipment stores;
- hall viewing and seating;
- multi-purpose activity room;
- gymnasium;
- first aid room;
- 25 metre swimming pool;
- external paving;
- car parking and drop-off facilities;
- general power and site lighting;
- sewage and stormwater collection;
- fencing; and
- adjacent oval reticulation.

3.112 During the course of its investigations, the Committee considered the following issues:

- **Lack of Detailed Plans and Costs.** At the public hearing, the Committee expressed concern at the lack of detailed plans appended to the DoTaRS submission and associated cost uncertainties. Design and construction cost details were subsequently provided to the Committee.
- **Location and Access.** The Committee sought to ascertain whether the proposed facility was appropriately sited and accessible to island residents.
- **Consultation.** The Committee received evidence of community concern at the consultation process undertaken by DoTaRS and requested that the agency continue to liaise with all relevant local bodies.
- **Ongoing Management.** The Committee requested that DoTaRS provide supplementary information regarding the ongoing management arrangements for the recreation centre.
- **Upgrade of the Oval.** The Committee was informed that reticulation of the new oval was necessary to maintain the condition of the pitch during the dry season. In response to a community submission, the Committee asked DoTaRS to consider including soccer markings on the new playing field.
- **Impact of the IRPC.** The Committee noted that the proposed recreation centre works would be executed concurrently with the construction of

the new IRPC. DoTaRS stated that the construction requirements of the IRPC would not impact upon the recreation centre works.

- Comparisons with other Remote Communities. The Committee wished to know why the DoTaRS submission used recreation centres at Derby and Broome, WA as a point of comparison with the proposed works. DoTaRS responded that Derby and Broome were remote communities, and that the Christmas Island Shire Council had requested that a comparison be made with Broome.
- Environmental Impacts. While the DoTaRS submission stated that the project would incur no significant environmental impacts, the Committee requested that DoTaRS provide written details of the consultation process undertaken in respect of this matter.

3.113 Having completed its consideration of the proposed recreation centre work, the Committee recommended that:

- DoTaRS continue to consult with the Christmas Island Cricket and Sporting Club, the school and the Administrator's Advisory Council;
- DoTaRS negotiate a settlement with the Shire Council to clarify ongoing maintenance of the recreation centre prior to the construction of the facility; and
- that the proposed community recreation centre on Christmas Island proceed at the estimated cost of \$8 million