



Australian Government
Department of Finance and Administration

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Ms Vivienne Courto
Inquiry Secretary
Parliamentary Standing Committee on
Public Works
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Ms Courto

I am writing in response to Christmas Island Phosphates' (CIP) 3 October 2003 submission to the current Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works inquiry into the proposed respecified Christmas Island Immigration Reception and Processing Centre (IRPC).

The Department of Finance and Administration (Finance) understands the important role CIP plays within the local Christmas Island community and both the Minister for Finance and Administration, Senator the Hon. Nick Minchin, and senior Finance officials met with CIP officials during the Ministerial visit to the Island in June 2003. It is Finance's intention to continually engage all Island stakeholders throughout the life of the project.

With regard to the CIP submission, it appears that two general themes have been raised in relation to the impact of the proposed IRPC: Christmas Island services and labour. Broadly, in regard to services, the project will be carried out in such a way as to ensure that the construction of the IRPC does not adversely impact on the level of services currently available to residents. In some instances services may be improved, however this respecified project is solely for the construction of an IRPC and does not propose to provide additional services beyond the requirements of the Centre.

The project is currently at the concept design stage and many of the issues, while identified in the project plans, are still to be explored and options developed. The following provides initial comments on the major issues raised in the CIP Submission:

Emergency Services

- An important part of the Facility Operator's role is the responsibility for the provision of all emergency services the IRPC requires and therefore it will be designed so as not to diminish the Christmas Island residents' access to their current services.
- Fire Protection - a specialist fire engineering consultant will be engaged in the design phase of the project and the Facility Operator will be required to provide and maintain all fire protection services.

- Ambulance – the Facility Operator will be required to provide all health related services. Additionally there are currently two ambulance vehicles on the Island that are under utilised.

Telecommunications

- The IRPC will require significant specialised telecommunications systems and services. A specialist consultant will be engaged during the design process to investigate and document those services.
- The majority of the issues raised by CIP are infrastructure issues that are not related to the IRPC project and are more appropriately pursued through other avenues.

Port Services

- It is recognised that CIP is a major port user and the logistics for its use will need to be planned in conjunction with CIP and the owner/operator the Department of Transport and Regional Services.
- Recognising the need for upgraded port facilities for the IRPC's construction the project budget has already constructed an additional port for use during the Swell Season and improved crane capacity from 30 tonnes to 50 tonnes at the main port at Flying Fish Cove.

Utilities

- Power – the present maximum demand is 4.6Mw, with the effective maximum capacity being 7.9Mw. At this early stage of concept design it is difficult to determine the exact power demand of the IRPC however it is not anticipated that it will exceed current maximum capacity.
- Water – demand forecasts based on the Christmas Island – Local Planning Strategy (2002) and the latest Town Planning Scheme, determined that the ultimate total annual capacity was approximately 1.6GL per year. In comparison the existing demand is approximately 0.35 GL per year.

Roads

- The Shire of Christmas Island is responsible for the maintenance of roads on the Island (including Murray Road) and any issues surrounding the impact of the IRPC's construction on the roads will be discussed with the Council.

Labour

- The compliance with all relevant procurement policies and industrial relations legislation and standards will be a high priority for this project. Outside of these laws it would be inappropriate for the project to interfere with any other commercial arrangements.

Thank you for the opportunity to address the issues raised in the CIP submission and we are happy, if required, to expand on any of these responses for the Committee at the upcoming Public Hearing.

Yours sincerely

Tim Wise
Assistant Secretary – Branch Manager Major Projects

17 October 2003