

Introduction

Referral of Work

- 1.1 On 26 June 2002 the proposal to construct a perimeter security fence at RAAF Base Tindal, near Katherine, 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 \$9.25 million. Mr Slipper stated that, subject to parliamentary approval, the works would commence early in 2003, with a view to completion by the end of the same year.

Background

Deferral of Reference

- 1.3 In July 2002, Defence advised the Committee secretariat that it wished to defer consideration of the Tindal perimeter fence until the

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

inspection and public hearing could be held together with those conducted in relation to the proposed relocation and re-equipping of the 1st Aviation Regiment in Darwin. At that time, it was envisaged that the Darwin work would be referred late in 2002.²

- 1.4 Work relating to the proposed collocation and re-equipping of the 1st Aviation regiment at Robertson Barracks, Darwin, NT was referred to the Committee on 25 March 2003, at which point arrangements were made for inspections and hearings for both the 1st Aviation Regiment project and the Tindal perimeter fence.
- 1.5 In view of the deferral, it is now proposed that, subject to Parliamentary approval, the work will commence in late 2003 with a view to completion by December 2004.³

Site of the Proposed Work

- 1.6 RAAF Base Tindal is one in a chain of airfields stretching across northern Australia. The Base is situated some 330 km south of Darwin and 10 km southeast of Katherine, and covers an area of approximately 10,400 ha.
- 1.7 RAAF Base Tindal is Commonwealth property controlled by the Department of Defence.
- 1.8 While the Base exists primarily for Defence purposes, the airfield also provides air services to the local civilian community on a leased basis.

Inquiry Process

- 1.9 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;

2 Public Works Committee memo, 2 July 2002

3 Appendix D, Official Transcript of Evidence, p. 3

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

- 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

1.10 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

1.11 The Committee travelled to RAAF Base Tindal and conducted both terrestrial and aerial inspections of the proposed work site. A public hearing was held at the Base on Wednesday, 9 July 2003.⁶

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

6 See Appendix D for the official Hansard transcript of the evidence taken by the Committee at the public hearing on Wednesday, 9 July 2003 at RAAF Base Tindal., NT.

