

Issues and Conclusions

Previous Works

- 3.1 The Committee sought information on other works undertaken since the Chancery was built in 1977. DFAT reported that there had been no major refurbishment of the Chancery office areas since it was built. Works carried out as part of a rolling program of maintenance have included, lift upgrades and routine changeover of equipment such as air conditioning chillers.¹

Building Occupancy

Staff

- 3.2 The Committee enquired as to the number of staff currently accommodated in the building. DFAT responded that there are presently 22 Australian-based and 60 – 70 locally engaged staff. Based on an accommodation survey completed by tenant agencies, DFAT anticipates that staffing levels will remain stable.²

1 Appendix D, Official Transcript of Evidence, p. 4

2 *ibid*

Third Floor Vacancy

- 3.3 DFAT states in its main submission that the proposed refurbishment and consolidation of the Chancery will create the potential for the third floor space to be made available for other functions.³ The Committee enquired as to how DFAT plans to utilise the vacant space.
- 3.4 DFAT explained that the vacant third floor will consist of approximately 1,200 square metres of office space, which could accommodate a new tenant should such an opportunity present.⁴ As part of the refurbishment the third floor would be fitted out to a very high standard at base-building level ready for future tenant requirements. Any further fitout as part of a new tenant occupancy would be at the cost of the tenant, not the Australian government.⁵
- 3.5 Given that the Chancery is a five storey building, the Committee was interested as to why the third floor was specifically chosen to be left vacant. DFAT explained that the other floors have substantial security features that require ongoing use.⁶
- 3.6 The Committee inquired as to whether a tenant for the third floor had been arranged. DFAT told the Committee that there was no prospective tenant at this stage. The diplomatic nature of the site prevents DFAT engaging in a normal subtenancy agreement. A prospective tenant would require diplomatic accreditation with the Singapore government.⁷

Environmental Considerations

Energy Conservation Measures

- 3.7 DFAT's main submission states that:

A Building Management System (BMS) will replace the outdated pneumatic control system and will monitor and control the mechanical services and include energy saving algorithms.⁸

3 Appendix C, Submission No. 1, paragraph 3.3

4 Appendix D, Official Transcript of Evidence, p. 4

5 *ibid*, p. 5

6 *ibid*, p. 4

7 *ibid*, p. 5

8 Appendix C, Submission No. 1, paragraph 17.12

- 3.8 The Committee sought further information as to the benefits of energy saving algorithms. DFAT replied that these were a key element of the refurbishment especially given the current level of energy inefficiency.⁹ The refurbished building will include energy conservation measures such as the zoning of areas and an intelligent lighting system. Zoning and intelligent lighting systems allow for segments of the building to be powered and lit as required, thus minimising energy usage.¹⁰
- 3.9 DFAT stated that, due to restrictions of existing building structure, it anticipates a 3 ½ star energy rating at best, after the proposed mid-life refurbishment and continued:

There is very little we [DFAT] can do to the external envelope to improve the heat gain into the building and that is the major deficiency which we [DFAT] cannot address through this current project.¹¹

Hazardous Materials

- 3.10 DFAT's main submission states that:

The removal of hazardous material will be undertaken in accordance with relevant legislation and approved safe work practices.¹²

The Committee sought more detail on the proposed removal of hazardous materials from the building. Specifically, members wished to know what hazardous materials are within the Chancery.

- 3.11 DFAT replied that the building contained such hazardous materials as Polychlorinated Biphenyls (PCBs) and asbestos. It is proposed that PCBs contained in the light fittings will be removed, and DFAT does not anticipate the removal to require any specialised removal procedures. Asbestos is present in such building elements as the main switchboard and external eaves. DFAT proposes to replace the switchboard components, whilst asbestos encapsulated in the eave soffits will not be disturbed in such a way as to render the material hazardous. DFAT further assured the Committee that the removal of hazardous materials would be carried out in accordance with safe work practices.¹³

9 Appendix D Official Transcript of Evidence, p. 10

10 *ibid*

11 *ibid*

12 Appendix C, Submission No. 1, paragraph 7.2

13 Appendix D, Official Transcript of Evidence, p.9

Building Codes and Standards

- 3.12 In its main submission DFAT details Australian and Singaporean building codes and standards to which the project will adhere. The Committee inquired as to whether there were any substantial differences in the application of these standards and codes.
- 3.13 DFAT informed the Committee that the Singaporean codes are of a similar high standard to Australian codes, however works being undertaken internally will be completed to Australian standards.¹⁴ DFAT further stated that contract works undertaken in Singapore will be undertaken in accordance with Singaporean law and standards. However, should any deficiencies in Singaporean codes or standards arise when compared with those of Australia, DFAT would incorporate specific requirements into tender documentation to ensure visitor and staff safety.¹⁵

Building Services and Amenity

Power Generator

- 3.14 DFAT's main submission states that a new primary generator will be installed to provide emergency power, whilst the existing emergency generator will be retained as a back-up. The Committee questioned the necessity of having two emergency generators, given that the current emergency generator is in working condition.¹⁶
- 3.15 DFAT informed the Committee that the current back-up generator is old and replacement is desirable. The removal and decommissioning of the existing back-up generator would not be cost effective, and secondly it is more economical to leave it in its current location and install a second generator.¹⁷

Provision for People with Disabilities

- 3.16 The Committee sought confirmation that any existing deficiencies in building access for people with disabilities would be were being

14 Appendix D, Official Transcript of Evidence, p. 6

15 *ibid*, p. 9

16 *ibid*, p. 7

17 *ibid*

addressed as part of the mid-life refurbishment upgrade. DFAT assured the Committee that full provision for disabled access had been taken into account, and that the upgrade of disabled access was an essential part of the refurbishment plan.¹⁸

Security

- 3.17 The Committee was interested to learn what security measures would be incorporated into the project. DFAT informed the Committee that much of the security works identified in this project are internal security features which are required as a result of office reconfigurations.¹⁹ DFAT explained further that the Chancery has a considerable setback from the public thoroughfare; at some places further than the minimum requirement of 30 metres.²⁰
- 3.18 Due to the sensitive nature of Chancery security, DFAT satisfied the Committee's inquiries in a confidential briefing prior to the public hearing. At the public hearing, DFAT stated that the Australian High Commission in Singapore has been undergoing extensive new security works over the past several years.²¹ DFAT's main submission also made mention of the current rolling security review of Australia's overseas Missions.²² DFAT assured the Committee that any external security modifications that may occur as part of the rolling security review would be incorporated into the current works proposal where possible to prevent duplication of works.²³

Recommendation 1

The Committee recommends that the proposed mid-life upgrade of existing Chancery at the Australian High Commission, Singapore, proceed at the estimated cost of \$12.7 million.

18 Appendix D, Official Transcript of Evidence, p. 8

19 *ibid*

20 *ibid*, p.9

21 *ibid*, p. 8

22 Appendix C, Submission No. 1, paragraph 25.3

23 Appendix D, Official Transcript of Evidence, p. 10

Hon Judi Moylan MP

Chair

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