



Secretary
Parliamentary Standing Committee
on Public Works
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

CP3-2-160
Department of Defence
CANBERRA ACT 2600
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**SUBMISSION FROM DEFENCE FAMILIES of AUSTRALIA
on the DHA proposal for housing at ADAMSTOWN, NSW**

INTRODUCTION

On behalf of the Defence Families of Australia (DFA), I would like to present a submission towards the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works consideration regarding the proposal by the Defence Housing Authority (DHA) for a housing development at Adamstown, NSW.

I have been appointed by the Minister assisting the Minister for Defence to represent the needs and interests of Australian Defence Force (ADF) families in all areas of personnel policy and conditions of service. I have consulted with the DFA State and local representatives in ascertaining the feedback of Defence families to the current DHA proposal and am pleased to make the following comments on their behalf.

DISCUSSION POINTS

1. Current housing issues in Newcastle

As stated in the DHA Submission, there is currently a shortage of DHA housing in the Newcastle area due to increased ADF requirements. This will be exacerbated over the next few years due to forthcoming lease expiries.

Subsequently, a relatively large percentage of ADF families in the Newcastle region rely on Rental Assistance (RA) to meet their housing needs. Whilst some members choose RA for a variety of reasons, it is an extremely unpopular housing solution for the majority of ADF members and families. RA requires the family to find accommodation through local real estate agents and pay market rent with a Defence housing subsidy. Subsequently, the family does not enjoy the tenure stability, freedom of pet ownership or the increased maintenance, security and relocation services offered through DHA.

Feedback from ADF families in Newcastle supports the need for more DHA houses to be available for ADF members and families in the Newcastle region. DHA has to maintain a suitable number of houses for ADF requirements but there is an increasing feeling amongst Defence families that RA is no longer a suitable alternative to DHA housing.

2. Future needs of Defence families in Newcastle

As the need for more DHA houses continues to be an issue in Newcastle (and many other locations around Australia), there is also a real need to meet the increased flexibility and choice requirements of modern ADF families. As with the general Australian populace, there are increasing numbers of spouses who seek to follow their careers and families who want a choice in education and lifestyle options.

For the ADF and DHA, this means providing Defence families with housing options that include a variety of styles and location. DFA representatives often hear from spouses and families in the Newcastle region who feel that the current offering of houses near the RAAF Base does not allow easy access to the Newcastle city area where employment and secondary schooling options are available.

Subsequently, we feel that the Adamstown development will provide detached and townhouse options for ADF families who would prefer a location close to schools, employment and hospitals as opposed to a location that is close to the member's place of work. There is a genuine need for ADF families to be offered a choice of locations so that they can enjoy the same quality of life options enjoyed by our community peers. This is particularly true in the Newcastle region where access to secondary schooling and employment is an issue for some families posted to RAAF Base Williamstown.

3. Spouse/ADF family representation on the DHA Board

As National Convenor for DFA, I am a Director on the DHA Board and represent the views and interests of ADF spouses and families. I feel very comfortable with the level of consultation with local ADF families in developing the Adamstown proposal. The Board has also commented previously on the house plans and styles that DHA provide. As DFA National Convenor and DHA Board Spouse Representative, I concur with the plans set forward in the DHA proposal.

SUMMARY

For the reasons set out above, the DFA is pleased to support the DHA proposal to develop off-base housing at Adamstown, NSW. On behalf of the DFA, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission on DHA's proposal. We would be more than happy to elaborate on any part of this submission for the Standing Committee if required.

Judy Swann
National Convenor
Defence Families of Australia
27 January 2003