

Introduction

Referral of Work

- 1.1 On 21 March 2002 the proposed Christmas Island common-use infrastructure – Christmas Island Airport was referred to the Public Works Committee for consideration and report to the Parliament in accordance with the provisions of the *Public Works Act 1969*.¹ The proponent agency for this project is the Department of Transport and Regional Services (DoTARS).

Background

- 1.2 The intention of the proposed airport upgrades is to provide improved services for the Christmas Island community and to support the proposed operation of a commercial space launch facility by the Asia Pacific Space Centre (APSC).²
- 1.3 On 9 August 2001 a similar proposal was referred to the Committee by DoTARS. That reference lapsed as a result of the prorogation of Parliament on 8 October 2001. The proposal included an airport upgrade,

1 Extract from the Votes and Proceedings No. 14, Thursday, 21 March 2002.

2 Refer Appendix B: Submission No. 1 Department of Transport and Regional Services (DoTARS) for full details of the proposal.

an additional port on the east coast and a new link road from the east coast to Lily Beach Road.

- 1.4 Prior to prorogation, DoTARS applied for and was granted approval in September 2001, for concurrent documentation on the grounds of the urgent nature of the proposed project. Such approval allowed DoTARS to undertake preliminary planning associated with the proposed works.
- 1.5 The project referred to the Committee on 21 March 2002 does not include the additional port and new link road projects. These two projects were incorporated in the infrastructure works associated with the Christmas Island Immigration Reception and Processing Centre and were the subject of an expediency motion moved in the House of Representatives the same day by the Parliamentary Secretary.³

Inquiry Process

- 1.6 The Committee is required by the Public Works Committee 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 cost of the work is being spent in the most cost efficient way;
 - 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
- 1.7 The Committee called for submissions by advertising the inquiry in *The West Australian* on Saturday, 13 April 2002. 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.

3 The House of Representative may resolve under Section 18 (8) (b) of the *Public Works Committee Act 1969* to exempt a public work from the Committee's scrutiny on the grounds of urgency House of Representatives Hansard, Thursday, 21 March 2002, p. 1950.

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

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

Inspections and Public Hearing

- 1.8 The Committee travelled to Christmas Island and inspected at first hand the scope and environs of the proposed works. A public hearing was held on the island on 12 June 2002.⁶

⁶ Refer Appendix C for the official Hansard transcript of the evidence taken by the Committee at the public hearing (Hansard Transcript) on Wednesday, 12 June 2002 at Christmas Island.