

Submission No. 3  
(Multi role helicopter facilities)

3L 29/4/08

**Joint Standing Committee  
On  
Public Works  
Multi Role Helicopter (MRH90)**

**Shoalhaven City Council  
18 April 2008**



## **OVERVIEW**

Shoalhaven City Council seeks to support the evidence presented to the Joint Standing Committee on Public Works for the construction of facilities for the introduction and operation of the Multi Role Helicopter (MRH90).

This Council will limit its comments to the proposal as it applies to HMAS ALBATROSS and indirectly to those aircraft that will operate out of Holsworthy.

Council acknowledges the decision by Government to replace the Sea King helicopters currently operating out of HMAS ALBATROSS as RAN 817 Squadron. The deployment of 6 MRH90 aircraft to Naval Air Station Nowra is the reason for the need for facilities upgrade.

Working with the Base management group since the early 1990's, Council recognizes that many of the existing operational facilities are old, do not allow optimal efficiency in operations and may contravene OH&S conditions of work.

The need for better operational hangarage of aircraft that replicates "ship conditions" in size and area will provide better working conditions for maintainers and aircrew from 817 Squadron.

This development is consistent with recent upgrades at the base in moving operational hangarage to the south of the base adjacent to Taxiway A and freeing up Taxiway B from parked aircraft and operations.

## **FACILITIES**

Council is aware that the MRH90s operating out of Holsworthy will spend time at ALBATROSS whilst exercising in and around Jervis Bay.

Whilst it is recognized that the Army MRH90s based at Holsworthy are not part of 817 Squadron is there any need to "assist" in the support of these visiting army aircraft and will the facilities proposed or alternate facilities be adequate for this?

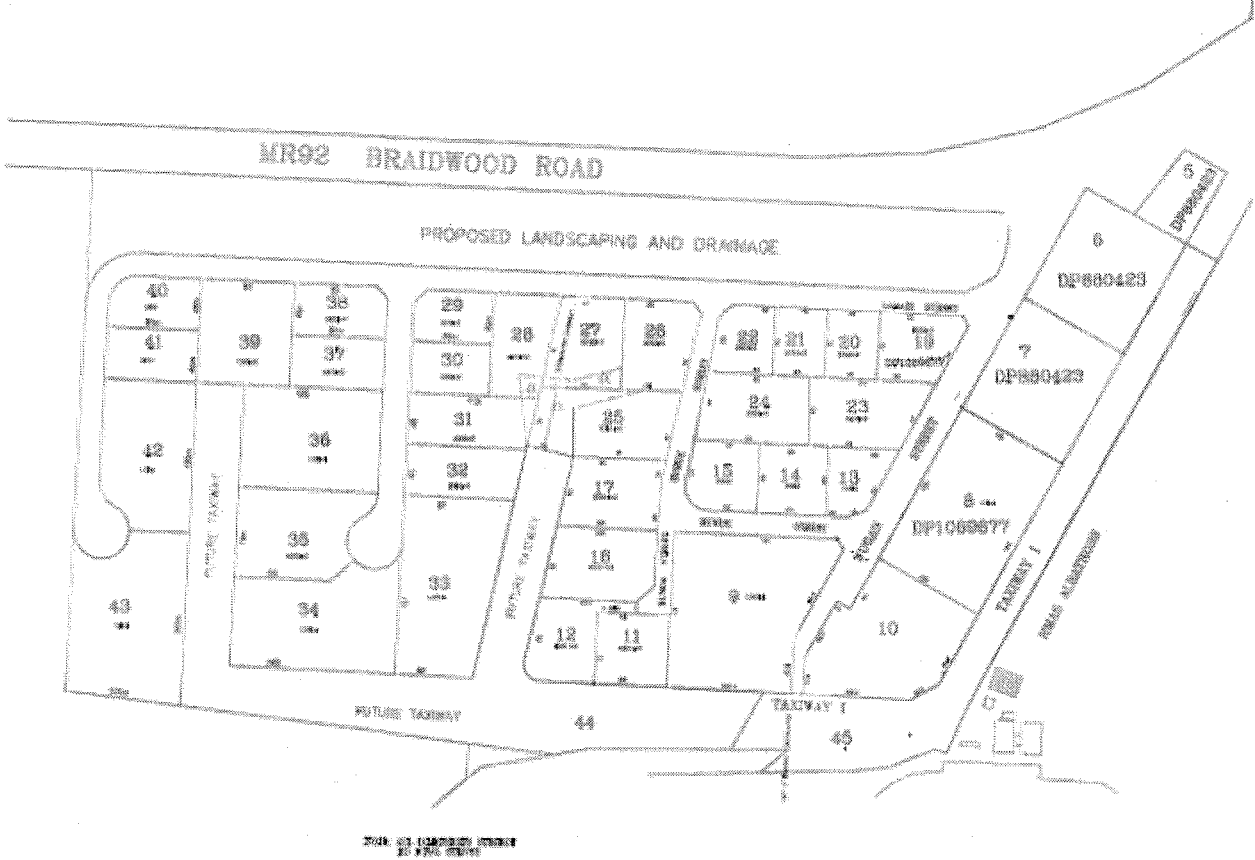
Council is also aware of the cessation of project SEA1411 and the closing down of 805 Squadron and mothballing of the Seasprite helicopters prior to their "sale" by Kaman Aerospace. It is also acknowledged that AIR9000 Phase 8 will provide aircraft to occupy the space currently used by 805 and 816 Squadrons and that the most probable year of entry to service is at least a decade away. Although some additional capability may be deployed to ALBATROSS as a result of the proposed Seahawk Capability Assurance Program, will all of 805 Squadron facilities be utilised for this purpose or is there better value in deploying the MRH90s into the 805 space until it is programmed to be utilised?

With AIR900 Phase 7 (Helicopter Aircrew Training System – HATS) being announced to be based out of Nowra, is sufficient space available for hangarage for the HATS operational aircraft between the proposed MRH90 facility and the existing Fire Station given that there could be 15-25 aircraft albeit smaller in size?

## **ECONOMIC BENEFIT TO SHOALHAVEN**

Council does support Base redevelopment and seeks to leverage off these operational facilities by enticing the deeper level maintenance for all helicopter types operating out of

ALBATROSS to be established at the Albatross Aviation Technology Park operating on the other side of the airfield based on aircraft access along Taxiway I.



The increase and modernisation in the overall operational facilities at ALBATROSS is supported by Shoalhaven City Council. The stated desire by the CoA to withdraw Government Furnished Facilities to contractors was a fundamental premise in the decision by Council to establish the Albatross Aviation Technology Park.

The proposal to upgrade these facilities for 817 Squadron and other facilities at HMAS ALBATROSS is supported on the understanding that GFF is progressively being withdrawn for contractors. To make this work for Shoalhaven and the CoA, there is a need for the provision within Defence support contracts for terms and duration of contract to recognize in the first instance that new facilities need to be constructed for, or by, contractors in the local area rather than utilising existing facilities which predominately are in the South East Queensland region.

Council is most concerned about the accumulated result of a number of independent decisions being made which, when accumulated, may not maximize the best economic potential to the Australian Defence Force/CoA and more importantly to the Shoalhaven economy.

Further clarification, comment or evidence can be obtained from the writer at Shoalhaven City Council.

Greg Pullen  
Economic Development Manager  
Shoalhaven City Council