

Introduction

Referral of Work

- 1.1 On 25 March 2003 the proposal for provision of facilities for the Australian Capital Territory Multi User Depot at HMAS Harman, 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 \$13.5 million. Mr Slipper noted further that, subject to Parliamentary approval, construction of the facilities would commence in September 2003 and would be completed and available for use by July 2004.

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

Background

The Multi User Depot Concept

- 1.3 The Multi User Depot (MUD) concept entails the provision of a single set of facilities to be shared by a number of part-time Defence Reserve or Cadet units, most of which use the facilities only one night per week and one weekend per month.
- 1.4 The MUD concept represents a more efficient use of Defence resources as it maximises the use and occupancy of shared facilities and allows for the provision of joint training and administrative services that may not otherwise be justifiable².
- 1.5 Under the proposed project, Defence intends to relocate a total of seven units to HMAS Harman. This number comprises four Reserve units, two Cadet units and one Regular RAAF unit. These units will share facilities with the two Reserve units and single Cadet unit currently based at HMAS Harman, bringing to ten the number of units utilising the MUD facilities³.
- 1.6 The working population of HMAS Harman is expected to increase by approximately 30 permanent staff, 500 Reserves and 250 Cadets as a result of the proposed works. As the great majority of these personnel will not be located at the base on a full-time basis, it is expected that existing parking and essential services infrastructure will be adequate to support the increase⁴.

Site of the Proposed Work

- 1.7 It is proposed that the new ACT MUD facility will be constructed at HMAS Harman, a naval establishment located to the east of Canberra near the ACT/NSW border, and adjacent to the western suburbs of Queanbeyan, NSW.
- 1.8 A number of Defence units are already located at HMAS Harman and it is anticipated that the messing, sporting and training facilities currently available at the Base will provide additional utility for MUD units⁵.

2 Appendix C, Submission No. 1, paragraph 8

3 ib id, paragraphs 2 - 3

4 ib id, paragraphs 62, 34 and 35

5 op cit, paragraphs 6 - 7

Inquiry Process

- 1.9 The Committee is required by the Act to consider public works over \$6 million⁶ 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;
 - 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.⁷
- 1.10 The Committee called for submissions by advertising the inquiry in *The Australian* on Wednesday 2 April 2003 and the *Canberra Times* on Monday 14 April 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 visited HMAS Harman and inspected at first hand the scope and environs of the proposed works. A public hearing was held at Parliament House, Canberra, on 30 May 2003⁸.

⁶ *Public Works Committee Act 1969*, Part III, Section 18 (8)

⁷ *Public Works Committee Act 1969*, Part III, Section 17

⁸ See Appendix D for the official Hansard transcript of the evidence taken by the Committee at the public hearing on Friday, 30 May 2003 in Canberra.

