

## Issues and Conclusions

### Site Considerations

#### Site Selection Process

- 3.1 In reviewing the evidence submitted by DFAT in respect of the Rangoon proposal the Committee noted that it had not been supplied with a comprehensive analysis of the site selection process and requested that this information be provided subsequent to the public hearing.
- 3.2 At the hearing, DFAT explained that its initial investigation of accommodation options had comprised a search for alternative leased premises, but that no suitable property had been identified. DFAT did not conduct an exploration of alternative building sites as it decided that the land occupied by the ambassadorial residence presented  

a perfectly suitable site already under government ownership.<sup>1</sup>
- 3.3 DFAT undertook to include a thorough rationale of its site selection processes in all future submission presented to the Committee.

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1 Appendix D, Official Transcript of Evidence, page 2

## Relocation of Burmese Administrative Headquarters

- 3.4 On 9 November 2005 an article appearing in *The Australian* reported that Burmese bureaucrats had been ordered to leave Rangoon for a new capital which would be located 320 kilometres to the north at Pyinmana near Mandalay.<sup>2</sup>
- 3.5 At the public hearing, Committee members questioned DFAT as to the impact of the relocation of the Burmese bureaucracy on the chancery project. DFAT responded that, based upon the best advice received to date, it did not expect the move to have any significant implications for the new chancery. Information had been received from the Burmese government to the effect that there is no intention to relocate diplomatic missions to the new administrative headquarters as sufficient foreign ministry staff will remain in Rangoon to service the needs of foreign missions.
- 3.6 DFAT informed the Committee that Australia was one of a number of countries currently engaged in the design and construction of new chanceries in Rangoon, adding that all of these countries were continuing to build on the assumption that there would be no requirement to relocate. By way of further assurance, DFAT explained that a similar situation had arisen previously with the relocation of the capital of Nigeria from Lagos to Abuja. The move had been forecast some 35 years ago, but Australia's embassy was only relocated in the past two years, as such relocations typically had a very long lead-time.<sup>3</sup>

## Impact upon Neighbouring Properties

- 3.7 Noting that the building site is bordered by residential premises, a business, an aged care facility and a school, the Committee sought assurance that consultation would be taken with neighbouring properties and appropriate dust and noise mitigation measures would be applied during construction. DFAT stated that whilst consultation had been minimal to date, it would be carried out prior to commencement of works.<sup>4</sup>

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2 *The Australian*, 9 November 2005

3 Appendix D, pages 5 - 6

4 *ibid*, page 4

## Hazardous Materials

- 3.8 The construction of the proposed new chancery will require the demolition of the existing tennis court and recreation facility at the residential compound. The Committee asked if the facilities earmarked for demolition contained any hazardous materials such as asbestos. DFAT was unable to answer the question at the hearing and undertook to provide the information at a later date. DAFT assured the Committee that its works contracts require the execution of a thorough compliance audit prior to demolition of any structures, and that any necessary mitigation of hazardous materials is carried out to Australian standards.<sup>5</sup>

## Building Services

### Electricity

- 3.9 DFAT submitted that electrical services to the chancery site are supplied via a transformer located in the adjacent international school, noting that supply is unreliable and outages are frequent. Back-up power is therefore supplied by an 85 kilovolt diesel generator and two smaller sets identified for replacement under the current project.<sup>6</sup>
- 3.10 The Committee sought assurance that the on-site power supply would be sufficient to cater for chancery needs in the event of a mains outage. DFAT confirmed that the generators would provide adequate power in an emergency situation.<sup>7</sup>

### Hydraulic Services

- 3.11 DFAT's submission recorded that the Bahan township in which the chancery will be located has unreliable mains water infrastructure, and no sewerage or fire hydrant services.<sup>8</sup> The embassy site has a water storage system comprising one 40,000 litre and one 8,000 litre underground tank, and a new bore is proposed as part of the current project.<sup>9</sup>

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5 Appendix D, page 4

6 Appendix C, paragraph 17.21 and 17.23

7 Appendix D, page 7

8 Appendix C, paragraph 13.1

9 Appendix C, paragraph 17.15

- 3.12 Members inquired whether it would be feasible to collect and reuse rain water, rather than discharging it into the stormwater system. DFAT responded that, whilst collection and reuse would be feasible, the environment did not warrant such measures as the local mains supply, with filtration precautions, was adequate.<sup>10</sup>

## **Air-conditioning**

- 3.13 DFAT proposes that the new chancery will be air-conditioned by air-cooled, split or packaged systems to allow for independent operation in specific tenancy areas as required.<sup>11</sup>
- 3.14 Considering the tropical environment, the Committee wished to know whether the proposed air-conditioning system required any particular precautions in respect of the *Legionella* bacillus. DFAT replied that the split units proposed for use in the chancery did not have any complex maintenance requirements, could be readily replaced in the event of malfunction and offered the additional efficiency benefit of individual operation.<sup>12</sup>

## **Security and Fire Protection Measures**

### **Security**

- 3.15 Having reviewed DFAT's written evidence, the Committee sought verbal confirmation that security measures at the new chancery would meet current and future emergency requirements. DFAT explained that the premises would reflect the latest thinking in respect of security precautions, including such measures as:
- appropriate perimeter setbacks;
  - security screening;
  - ram-proof fences;
  - guardhouses and metal detection at entry points; and

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10 Appendix D, page 7

11 Appendix C, paragraph 17.11

12 Appendix D, page 7

- blast-hardening of the chancery building.<sup>13</sup>

3.16 The Committee queried whether DFAT's intention to provide the embassy site with two entry/exit roads represented the most cost-effective and secure solution. DFAT explained that this was a required security feature, as it provides an alternative should one of the entry/exit points be unusable.<sup>14</sup>

## Fire Protection

3.17 Noting that the Bahan township has no fire hydrant services, the Committee wished to know how DFAT proposed to provide fire services to the site. DFAT explained that it would be installing a substantial water tank and that water storage facilities would be provided for the specific purpose of supplying the fire protection sprinkler system and hydrants.<sup>15</sup>

### Recommendation 1

**The Committee recommends that the proposed construction of a new chancery building for the Australian Embassy at Rangoon, Burma, proceed at the estimated cost of \$12.87 million.**

**Hon Judi Moylan MP**

Chair

15 February 2006

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13 Appendix D, page 7

14 *ibid*, page 8

15 *ibid*