

Consultation

Introduction

4.1 DHA advised the Committee that it had consulted with various authorities, organisations and governmental departments in relation to the proposed development. They included:

- the ACT Department of Treasury and Infrastructure;
- the ACT Department of Urban Services;
- the ACTEW Corporation;
- the Chief Minister's Department;
- the Environment ACT;
- the Minister assisting the Minister for Defence;
- the National Consultative Group of Services Families;
- the Property Council of Australia (ACT Division); and
- the Weston Creek Community Council.¹

¹ DHA submission, 4 July 2000, p. 5.

Community consultation

- 4.2 DHA advised the Committee that it had met with community leaders and local residents on several occasions and that issues raised were primarily concerned with increased vehicular traffic and the need for traffic arrangements on Streeton Drive with or without the proposed development.²
- 4.3 Despite the efforts of DHA to advertise its intentions with regard to the proposed development through community meetings and advertising, the Committee received evidence challenging the sincerity and adequacy of the consultation processes engaged in by DHA.
- 4.4 One of the criticisms received by the Committee was that DHA had said it would retain 100 per cent ownership of the land³ and yet DHA's submission to the Committee stated that DHA intended to market 50 per cent of the development.⁴
- 4.5 When questioned at the public hearing about this apparent inconsistency, DHA advised the Committee that:
- The ownership is an issue that I do not believe the authority discussed because it is tied up very much with the financing of the property. The general approach that the authority likes to adopt is to use the sale and lease-back program because it has been found to be a very effective way of financing housing in the community and it is widely used right throughout the whole of Australia very successfully.⁵
- 4.6 Another criticism regarding the voracity of DHA's consultation process raised at the public hearing was the construction timetable. Evidence received by the Committee indicated that DHA had advised a community consultative meeting of 2 February 2000 that DHA proposed to start construction in mid June and for it to be completed by the beginning of December 2000 to accommodate the placement of families by January 2001.⁶
- 4.7 At the public hearing the Committee questioned DHA as to how it could provide such advice when its submission to Committee stated that DHA

2 DHA submission, 4 July 2000, p. 11.

3 Transcript of evidence, pp. 64-66

4 DHA submission, 4 July 2000, p.9.

5 Transcript of evidence, p. 40.

6 Transcript of evidence, p. 40.

would like to have the development on-line and available by end June 2001 to accord with the mid-year Defence posting cycle.⁷ Defence advised the Committee that:

That [December 2000 commencement] was the preferred time frame in which we would like to have achieved the completion of the project in order to support the Defence College, so that that houses were available in order for families to move in prior to the commencement of the course.⁸

- 4.8 The Committee concluded that it would have been preferable had DHA's community consultation process been more transparent, particularly with regard to ownership and construction commencement timetables.

Recommendation 7

- 4.9 The Committee recommends that DHA hold community meetings prior to the projects completion to facilitate project implementation and minimise community disturbance.**

7 DHA submission, 4 July 200, p. 10.

8 Transcript of evidence p. 40.