

Introduction

Referral of Work

- 1.1 On 31 May 2007 the proposal for the C-17 Heavy Air Lift Infrastructure Project was referred to the Public Works Committee for consideration and report to 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 Honourable Peter Lindsay MP Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Defence informed the House that the expected out turn cost of the proposal is \$268.2 million, plus GST. Subject to Parliamentary approval, construction will commence in early 2008 and be completed by 2011.

Background

- 1.3 In March 2006, the Minister for Defence announced the Australian Defence Force's acquisition of four Boeing C-17 Globemaster III aircraft and

¹ Extract from the *Votes and Proceedings of the House of Representatives*, No. 175, Thursday 31 May 2007.

associated equipment. The aircraft will provide a responsive global, heavy air lift capability for the Australian Defence Force. In December 2006 the first C-17 aircraft arrived with the three remaining aircraft due to arrive in May 2007, February and March 2008 respectively.

- 1.4 RAAF Base Amberley has been selected as the 'home-base' for the C-17 aircraft, and will be operated by No. 36 Squadron which relocated to RAAF Base Amberley in November 2006 from RAAF Base Richmond, NSW.
- 1.5 RAAF Base Amberley was first established in 1940 and has been in continuous service as a major Australian air base since this time. The base has traditionally been home to the F-111 strike capability; however, more recently the base has become a centre for Air Lift activities. Amberley is also the home base for the KC-30B Multi-Role Tanker Transport as well as for the C-17 aircraft.²

Site of the Proposed Works

- 1.6 The proposed works will be undertaken at the following sites:
 - RAAF Base Amberley which is located approximately 8 km west of the City of Ipswich, at the western edge of the Brisbane Metropolitan Area;
 - RAAF Base Darwin which is located approximately 6½ km north-east of Darwin's central business district;
 - RAAF Base Edinburgh, located approximately 30 km north of Adelaide in the Edinburgh Defence Precinct;
 - RAAF Base Pearce is located adjacent to the town of Bullsbrook, north of Perth; and,
 - RAAF Base Townsville is located approximately 7 km from Townsville's Central Business District.
- 1.7 All of the works associated with this project will be undertaken within the perimeters of these bases.

2 Appendix C, Submission No. 1, paragraph 5. See also the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works, *RAAF Base Amberley Redevelopment Stage 2, Queensland*, Eighteenth Report of 2005, paragraph 2.2.

Inquiry Process

- 1.8 The Committee is required by the Act to consider public works over \$15 million³ 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.⁴
- 1.9 The Committee called for submissions by advertising the inquiry in *The Weekend Australian* and *The Courier Mail* on Saturday, 9 June 2007. 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.

Inspection and Hearing

- 1.10 On 14 June 2007, the Minister for Defence, The Hon Dr Brendan Nelson wrote to the Committee seeking agreement for the C-17 Heavy Air Lift Infrastructure works at RAAF Base Amberley, RAAF Base Darwin, RAAF Base Edinburgh, RAAF Base Pearce, and RAAF Base Townsville to be considered as 'repetitive works'. On 21 June, the Committee replied to the Minister agreeing to his request. In accordance with Section 18(8A) of the Act, it is expected that a notification of 'repetitive works' will be promulgated in the *Government Notices Gazette* No. GN 35 of 5 September 2007.
- 1.11 On Tuesday, 24 July 2007, the Committee inspected the site works proposed for RAAF Base Amberley as part of the overall C-17 Heavy Air Lift Infrastructure project. This was followed by a confidential hearing

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

4 *ibid*, Section 17.

and a public hearing attended by officials of the Department of Defence, both of which were held at the Ipswich International Hotel, Ipswich, Queensland.⁵

5 See Appendix D for the official Hansard transcript of the evidence taken by the Committee at the public hearing on Tuesday, 24 July 2007 at Ipswich International Hotel, Ipswich, Queensland.