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The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia

# **Facilities for Troop Lift Helicopter, RAAF Base Townsville, Qld**

Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works

September 2006  
Canberra

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## **Membership of the Committee**

**Chair** Hon Judi Moylan MP

**Deputy Chair** Mr Brendan O'Connor

**Members** Mr John Forrest MP

Senator Michael Forshaw

Mr Harry Jenkins MP

Senator Stephen Parry

Mr Bernie Ripoll MP

Senator the Hon Judith Troeth

Mr Barry Wakelin MP

## **Committee Secretariat**

**Secretary** Mrs Margaret Swieringa

**Inquiry Secretary** Mr Jason Sherd

**Senior Research Officer** Mr Raymond Knight

**Research Officer** Ms Penny Wijnberg

**Administrative Officer** Mr Peter Ratas



## List of Abbreviations

5 Avn Regt	5 <sup>th</sup> Aviation Regiment
Defence	Department of Defence
ESD	Ecologically Sustainable Development
MRH90	Multi-role Helicopter 90
NAACEX	Northern Australian Aeronautical Centre of Excellence
OH&S	Occupational Health and Safety
RAAF	Royal Australian Air Force
the Act	<i>Public Works Committee Act 1969</i>



# **Extract from the Votes and Proceedings of the House of Representatives**

No. 104 dated Thursday 1 June 2006

## **3 PUBLIC WORKS – PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE – REFERENCE OF WORK – FACILITIES FOR TROOP LIFT HELICOPTER, RAAF BASE TOWNSVILLE, QLD**

Mr Nairn (Special Minister of State), pursuant to notice, moved – That, in accordance with the provisions of the *Public Works Committee Act 1969*, the following proposed work be referred to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works for consideration and report: Facilities for troop lift helicopter, RAAF Base Townsville, Qld.

Debate ensued.

Question – put and passed.



# List of Recommendations

## 3 Issues and Conclusions

### Recommendation 1

The Committee recommends that the provision of facilities for Troop Lift Helicopter, RAAF Base Townville, Qld, proceed at the estimated cost of \$20 million.



## Introduction

### Referral of Work

- 1.1 On 1 June 2006, the proposal for the provision of Facilities for Troop Lift Helicopter, RAAF Base Townsville, Queensland, was referred to the Public Works Committee for consideration and report in accordance with the provisions of the *Public Works Committee Act 1969* (the Act).<sup>1</sup> The proponent agency for this work is the Department of Defence (Defence).
- 1.2 The Hon Gary Nairn MP, Special Minister of State, advised the House that the estimated cost of the proposed works was \$20 million. Subject to parliamentary approval, the works would commence late this year, with completion expected in early 2008.

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<sup>1</sup> Extract from the *Votes and Proceedings of the House of Representatives*, No. 104, Thursday 1 June 2006

## Background

### RAAF Base Townsville

- 1.3 The 5<sup>th</sup> Aviation Regiment (5 Avn Regt) is located in the south western precinct of RAAF Base Townsville which is approximately seven kilometres from the Townsville CBD.<sup>2</sup>
- 1.4 RAAF Base Townville is maintained for the defence and surveillance of the northern areas of Australia and the base will remain operational under current long term planning.<sup>3</sup>

## Inquiry Process

- 1.5 The Committee is required by the Act to consider public works over \$6 million<sup>4</sup> 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.<sup>5</sup>
- 1.6 The Committee called for submissions by advertising the inquiry in *The Townsville Bulletin* on Saturday, 1 July 2006. The Committee also sought submissions from relevant government agencies, 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.

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2 Appendix C, Submission No. 1, paragraphs 2 and 10

3 *ibid*, paragraph 3

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

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

## **Inspection and Public Hearing**

- 1.7 On 18 August 2006 the Committee visited RAAF Base Townsville and inspected the site and environs of the proposed works. A confidential briefing from the Department of Defence and a public hearing were held in Townsville later that day.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> See Appendix D for the official Hansard transcript of the evidence taken by the Committee at the public hearing on Friday, 18 August 2006 at the Mercure Inn, Townsville, Qld

## The Proposed Works

### Purpose

- 2.1 The purpose of this proposal is to provide facilities to support the introduction of the MRH90 (Multi-role Helicopter 90) aircraft.<sup>1</sup> This will include the refurbishment, re-use and construction of facilities of the Army's 5 Avn Regt facilities.<sup>2</sup>

### Need

- 2.2 The 171<sup>st</sup> Aviation Squadron has been relocated to Holsworthy Barracks and will be replaced at Townsville by a squadron equipped with the new MRH90 which "can carry troops, small vehicles or underslung cargo".<sup>3</sup> The MRH90 is being introduced under Defence Capability Plan Project Air 9000 (Phase 2).<sup>4</sup>

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1 Appendix C, Submission No. 1, paragraph 11

2 *ibid*, paragraph 1

3 *ibid*, paragraph 2

4 *ibid*, paragraph 1

- 2.3 The delivery of the MRH90 aircraft will be phased in over 18 months from December 2007. Defence plans to provide facilities progressively from July 2007 until February 2008.<sup>5</sup>

## Cost

- 2.4 The estimated project cost is \$20 million excluding GST. This figure includes:
- construction costs with fit-out;
  - professional fees;
  - furniture and fittings;
  - information technology; and
  - a contingency sum.<sup>6</sup>
- 2.5 In addition, there will be a slight increase in the operating costs of RAAF Base Townsville. This increase can be attributed to “the energy, maintenance and garrison support cost for the new buildings”.<sup>7</sup>

## Scope

- 2.6 Defence’s proposal involves:
- construction of a new purpose built building (Training and Mission Planning);
  - refurbishment of existing buildings (aircraft shelters, repair parts store and workshops);
  - extension of two buildings (to house repair parts administration, ground support equipment workshop and storage, and Draft Priority 1 equipment storage); and
  - construction of car parking and engineering services infrastructure.<sup>8</sup>

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5 Appendix C, Submission No. 1, paragraph 6

6 *ibid*, paragraph 13

7 *ibid*, paragraph 14

8 *ibid*, paragraph 9

2.7 The details of the works are as follows:

- Aircraft Shelters – minor modifications;
- Technical Support Squadron Workshops – refurbishment and reconfiguration;
- Repair Parts Store – minor modifications and extensions for administration functions;
- Draft Priority 1 Store – a new extension for Draft Priority 1 storage;
- Ground Support Equipment – new extensions to provide a workshop and a storage facility;
- Mission Planning Facility / Army Aviation Training Facility – new combined facility; and
- car parking and infrastructure – new asphalt car park and services infrastructure including electrical, water and sewerage reticulation.<sup>9</sup>

## Project Delivery

2.8 Defence submitted that, subject to Parliamentary approval, the project would commence in late 2006 with completion expected in early 2008.<sup>10</sup>

2.9 Further, Defence stated that the project would be delivered using a Head Contractor delivery system as it feels that this delivery system is particularly suited to works, such as the current proposal, where the scope is well defined.<sup>11</sup>

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9 Appendix C, Submission No. 1, paragraph 26

10 *ibid*, paragraph 8

11 *ibid*, paragraph 82

## Issues and Conclusions

### Defence Forward Planning

3.1 Defence's submission stated that

...government is currently considering some later phases of Project Air 9000, replacement or refurbishment of Black Hawk and replacement of Sea King helicopters. Depending on options selected by Government, these phases may have future implications for the 5 Avn Regt precinct.<sup>1</sup>

3.2 At the hearing Defence amended this statement:

On 19 June this year, the Prime Minister and the Minister for Defence announced the purchase of an additional 34 multi-role helicopters and that these would be purchased under Project Air 9000 phases 4 to 6 to replace the remaining Black Hawks of 5 Avn Regt and the Sea King helicopter fleets.<sup>2</sup>

3.3 The Committee queried what impact this operational change would have on the current proposal. Defence responded that it had considered the possibility of the operational change occurring and as such had planned for both eventualities. Defence stated that it was confident that it was

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1 Appendix C, Submission No. 1, paragraph 24

2 Appendix D, Official Transcript of Evidence, page 3

...well placed to continue development to now cater for the replacement of the remaining Black Hawks with MRH90's.<sup>3</sup>

- 3.4 The Committee questioned Defence on the long term planning for RAAF Base Townsville. Defence responded that their

...long term plan is that RAAF Base Townsville will be an enduring base and that 5 Avn Regt will remain at RAAF Base Townsville.<sup>4</sup>

## Other Issues

- 3.5 Townsville Airport submitted that it has been consulting with Defence regarding the Northern Australian Aeronautical Centre of Excellence (NAACEX) which:

Is designed to compliment and improve the operations of both civilian and military activities at Townsville Airport.<sup>5</sup>

- 3.6 Townsville Airport also submitted that it supports the redevelopment, and that it feels that

...the NAACEX initiative by [Townsville Airport] offers an alternative for [Defence] when considering the most cost effective way in which to provide facilities and services to support the MRH90 and other [Defence] owned platforms and systems.<sup>6</sup>

- 3.7 Mr Lindsay MP, the local Federal Member, appeared before the Committee and stated that he supported the current proposal. Mr Lindsay drew the Committee's attention to issues such as Defence's future planning to the support the MRH90's, the Townville Airport proposal and the possibility that Defence may purchase more CH47 Chinook helicopters. Mr Lindsay stated that he wanted the Committee to consider the proposal

...in a holistic way to the future of what Defence proposes a little bit down the track for the city in relation to the development of the aviation industry.<sup>7</sup>

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3 Appendix D, Official Transcript of Evidence, page 6

4 *ibid*, page 7

5 Volume of Submissions, Submission no. 2, page 1

6 *ibid*

7 Appendix D, Official Transcript of Evidence, page 2



- 3.8 The Committee however, cannot give due consideration to issues relating to future developments as they are not directly related to the proposal that is currently before it.

## Joint User Arrangements

### RAAF Base Townsville Runway Access

- 3.9 At the hearing, the Committee heard that RAAF Base Townsville shares the runway with the civilian airport. The Committee requested clarification of the Joint User deed between Townsville Airport and Defence, to ensure that

...we [the Commonwealth] are not going to invest \$20 million in a base that might become redundant next year with no ongoing lease.<sup>8</sup>

- 3.10 Defence stated that the Joint User deed is due for renewal, and that it expects the deed to be renewed. Further, Defence stated that:

The runway belongs to the Commonwealth and the lease is for the airport to actually make use of it.<sup>9</sup>

## Security Considerations

- 3.11 The Committee raised concerns as to the proximity of the civilian airport to the RAAF Base's helicopter hangars. Defence responded that:

Both the Air Force, the military defence, side of the base and the Townsville Airport are secure areas. Townsville Airport has security systems in place with airside identity cards for all their personnel on the hardstand and the airside of the airport... The Defence part of the airfield similarly has security measures in place. Both Townsville Airport and Defence have security and safety patrols frequenting the area. Defence's side includes military working dogs.<sup>10</sup>

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8 Appendix D, Official Transcript of Evidence, page 8

9 *ibid*

10 *ibid*, page 12

## Occupational Health and Safety Issues (OH&S)

- 3.12 Defence submitted that the facilities would comply with the relevant sections of:
- the *Occupational Health and Safety (Commonwealth Employees) Act 1991*;
  - the Department of Defence Occupational Health and Safety Manual; and
  - Queensland Government Occupational Health and Safety Legislation.<sup>11</sup>
- 3.13 At the Hearing the Committee enquired if Defence was satisfied that it had addressed all relevant OH&S concerns. Defence responded that it was confident that the facilities would be in compliance with all relevant OH&S guidelines. Defence added that:

The facility will be inspected regularly and will meet the federal and state government requirements.<sup>12</sup>

## Environmental Considerations

### Town Common

- 3.14 Mr Lindsay, assured the Committee that the proximity of the base to the town common was not likely to raise any issues.<sup>13</sup> The Committee raised this consideration with Defence and heard that the town common
- ... is a coastal wetlands area frequented by birds and is the town environmental park.<sup>14</sup>
- 3.15 Defence assured the Committee that pollutants from the 5 Avn Regt would not impact on the town common. The Committee heard that the 5 Avn Regt is serviced by four oil-water separators and all the service run-off is directed through those filters to separate solids and oil out of the water prior to its disposal on the town common. Defence informed the Committee that CSI North Queensland monitors the aviation base, with approximately 50 groundwater monitoring bores on site:

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11 Appendix C, Submission No. 1, paragraph 61

12 Appendix D, Official Transcript of Evidence, page 9

13 *ibid*, page 2

14 *ibid*, page 11

This is done on an annual basis so we are monitoring to ensure that there is no groundwater plume and we are quite happy that we will not affect the town common.<sup>15</sup>

## Energy Efficiency

- 3.16 Defence submitted that Ecologically Sustainable Development (ESD) had been utilised in the design of the facilities. This included:
- analysing construction materials, finishes and engineering services against ESD criteria;
  - specific performance targets for energy savings;
  - water reduction; and
  - waste reduction.<sup>16</sup>
- 3.17 Defence's submission stated that the project has adopted ...cost effective ESD as a key objective in the design, development and delivery of new and refurbished facilities.<sup>17</sup>
- 3.18 Further, Defence stated that ...the energy efficiency of the new buildings will be audited within twelve months of occupancy.<sup>18</sup>
- 3.19 Defence submitted that the ESD design included:
- using insulation and weatherproofing seals;
  - using energy efficient lighting and lighting control systems;
  - using energy efficient plant and equipment;
  - providing the capability to control energy use by zones within the facility;
  - specification of waterless urinals and AAA water efficient fixtures; and
  - using Building Management Systems as part of an area wide energy management strategy.<sup>19</sup>

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15 *ibid*

16 Appendix C, Submission No. 1, paragraph 21

17 *ibid*, paragraph 63

18 *ibid*, paragraph 64

19 *ibid*, paragraph 65

- 3.20 At the hearing the Committee heard that the new Training and Mission Planning facility will be able to achieve a four Green Star rating, which is a rating system that was developed for office buildings.<sup>20</sup>

## Scope

- 3.21 Defence submitted that part of the redevelopment will involve re-designing the Aircraft shelters to “suit tail first parking”.<sup>21</sup>
- 3.22 At the hearing the Committee asked Defence about the extent of the works proposed for the hangars, and the reasons for the modifications. Defence responded that as the wheelbase of the MRH90 is wider than the Black Hawk, the concrete pads in the hangars would be widened. The MRH90 would be parked tail first for logistical reasons, which necessitated moving some lights in the hangar. Additionally, Defence would be upgrading the fire detection systems and security access to the hangars.<sup>22</sup>

## Project Delivery

- 3.23 The Committee questioned Defence as to the delivery of the project and the special planning that Defence had undertaken in this regard. Defence tabled a phasing plan which demonstrated how the works would be phased in while maintaining the functioning of the 5 Avn Regt. Further, as much of the works would be performed on the hangars that the 171<sup>st</sup> Aviation Squadron Black Hawks vacated, disruption during the construction period would be minimised.<sup>23</sup>

## Quality of Evidence

- 3.24 At the hearing the Committee expressed its appreciation to Defence for the comprehensive site inspection and the quality of evidence provided to the inquiry.<sup>24</sup>

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20 Appendix D, Official Transcript of Evidence, page 9

21 Appendix C, Submission No. 1, paragraph 27

22 Appendix D, Official Transcript of Evidence, page 10

23 *ibid*, page 10-11

24 *ibid*, page 12

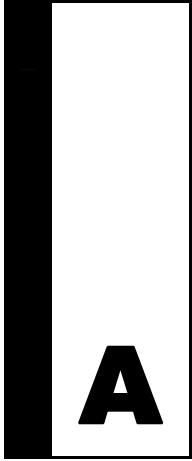
**Recommendation 1**

**The Committee recommends that the provision of facilities for Troop Lift Helicopter, RAAF Base Townville, Qld, proceed at the estimated cost of \$20 million.**

**Hon Judi Moylan MP**

Chair

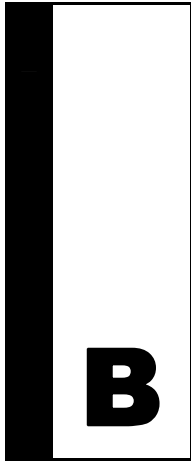
13 September 2006



## **Appendix A – List of Submissions**

### **Submissions**

1. Department of Defence
2. Townsville Airport Pty Ltd



## **Appendix B – List of Witnesses**

Wing Commander Graeme Davies, Base Commander and Commanding Officer 323 Combat Support Squadron, RAAF Base Townsville

Wing Commander Rohan Gaskill, Project Director, Troop Lift Helicopters Facilities, Infrastructure Asset Development Branch, Department of Defence

Colonel William Grice, Acting Director General, Infrastructure Asset Development Branch, Department of Defence

Mr David Hudson, Project Manager, Thinc Projects

Mr Peter Lindsay MP, Federal Member for Herbert

Lieutenant Colonel Michael Prictor, Commanding Officer, 5<sup>th</sup> Aviation Regiment, Australian Army

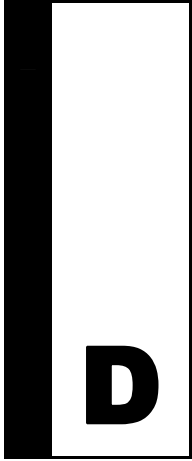
Mr Mark Remmers, Program Director, AIR 9000 MRH, Defence Materiel Organisation

Mr Michael Rinaudo, Manager, Defence and Security, Project Director Design Team, GHD Pty Ltd



**Appendix C – Submission No. 1 from the  
Department of Defence**





## **Appendix D – Official Transcript of Evidence**