

Australian Federal Police proposed new forensic facility at Majura, ACT

- 4.1 The Australian Federal Police (AFP) proposes to deliver a fit-for-purpose facility that will be fully operational by the end of 2015, assuring AFP forensic and technical intelligence operations and projected growth of specialist disciplines over the next 20 years.
- 4.2 The objectives of the project are to:
- meet current and future business needs associated with continued growth in forensic requirements for the next 20 years
 - overcome increasing risks associated with poor design and non-compliance with contemporary building standards of the currently leased facility
 - resolve potential problems associated with expiry of the current lease at Weston or decisions of the landlord which may affect the future use and intent of the property
 - enable important productivity gains through system and business process reforms, based on fundamental redesign of the workplace and application of the collaborative forensic model
 - overcome constraints that inhibit the implementation of new and future forensic and technical intelligence capabilities.¹
- 4.3 The cost of the project is \$106 million, excluding GST.
- 4.4 The project was referred to the Committee on 29 November 2012.

1 AFP, Submission 1, pp. 12-13.

Conduct of the inquiry

- 4.5 Following referral to the Committee, the inquiry was advertised on the Committee's website, by media release and in the *Canberra Times* newspaper.
- 4.6 The Committee received one submission and one supplementary submission from the AFP. The list of submissions can be found at Appendix A.
- 4.7 The Committee received a private briefing and conducted a site inspection, a public hearing and an in-camera hearing on 8 February 2013 in Canberra.
- 4.8 A transcript of the public hearing and the submission to the inquiry are available on the Committee's website.²

Need for the works

- 4.9 The AFP's ability to perform its role in forensic science and technical intelligence, both now and in the future, is constrained by a number of key problems and challenges with the current facility at Weston.
- 4.10 These constraints include:
- anticipated growth in forensic requirements
 - functional design problems
 - site planning and tenure constraints
 - vulnerable forensic systems and processes.³
- 4.11 During its inspection of the AFP's current facilities in Weston, the Committee viewed an evidence collection space, the armoury and a demountable forensic laboratory. The Committee notes that these spaces were crowded and limited the efficiency of the AFP's evidence collection and analysis. The Committee also observed a lack of storage space, particularly in the armoury.
- 4.12 The AFP considered four options to meet the need for improved forensic facilities:
- do a minimal upgrade of the existing Weston facility
 - do a major refurbishment and upgrade of the existing Weston facility
 - lease a new purpose-built facility
 - construct a new purpose-built facility at the AFP's Majura Complex.⁴

2 <www.aph.gov.au/pwc>

3 AFP, Submission 1, pp. 6-8.

4 AFP, Submission 1, pp. 8-9.

- 4.13 The Committee is satisfied that the AFP considered various options for improving its forensic capabilities. The Committee commends the AFP for providing detail on each option's advantages and disadvantages, and for clearly outlining in the public submission why it chose the fourth option.⁵
- 4.14 The Committee is satisfied that there is a need for the works.

Scope of the works

- 4.15 The facility would accommodate the following specialist forensic and technical intelligence disciplines:
- Australian Bomb Data Centre
 - Australian Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear Data Centre
 - Crime Scene Sciences
 - Forensic Intelligence
 - Search Precinct (combining Exhibit Management and Rapid Laboratory)
 - Facial Identification, Imagery and Geometrics
 - Firearms Identification and Armoury Team (FIAT)
 - Fingerprint Identification
 - Biological Criminalistics
 - Chemical Criminalistics
 - Electronic Evidence (Computer Forensics and Audio & Video Signal Processing)
 - Document Sciences
 - Planning, Deployment and Systems (combining Operational Planning and Deployment and Operational Systems)
 - Policy Projects and Planning
 - Capability Development and Training
 - Executive, Chief Scientist and Quality Management.⁶
- 4.16 The facility will comprise the following spaces:
- office spaces
 - conferencing and training laboratory facilities
 - meeting rooms

5 AFP, Submission 1, pp. 8-10.

6 AFP, Submission 1, pp. 11-12.

- laboratories (biological, chemistry, document sciences, ballistics, fingerprint, specialist hazards)
 - search precinct
 - exhibit storage
 - Fire Arms Identification and Armoury Team (industrial areas)
 - central store and logistics (general storage, garaging/ vehicle store, workshops)
 - mechanical plant rooms
 - staff facilities.⁷
- 4.17 Subject to Parliamentary approval, construction is planned to commence in late 2013 and be completed by mid-2015.⁸
- 4.18 The Committee finds that the proposed scope of works is suitable to meet the need.

Cost of the works

- 4.19 The cost of the project is \$106 million, excluding GST. The Committee received a confidential supplementary submission detailing the project costs and held an in-camera hearing with the AFP on these costs.
- 4.20 The Committee is satisfied that the costings for the project provided to it have been adequately assessed by the proponent agency.

Project issues

Childcare

- 4.21 The AFP's submission stated that the new facility does not have any provision for childcare.⁹ At the public hearing, the AFP indicated that it has a predominantly female workforce, and explained why childcare provisions have not been included:

We are very aware of the implications that you are talking about. We have had the same concerns. We had the same question about what needs needed to be met. As a consequence, we ran a survey of our staff.

Of the Weston based staff, we had 92 respondents to that survey – which is approaching half of our staff – of which, 84.8 per cent do

7 AFP, Submission 1, pp. 15-17.

8 AFP, Submission 1, p. 31.

9 AFP, Submission 1, p. 27.

not currently use childcare facilities. Where they did use childcare facilities, the preference was to have childcare facilities in closer proximity to their home than the workplace. For them that was logistically the best option and gave them greater flexibility. So we are fairly satisfied that we did not need to pursue a childcare facility on site. Although we are aware that there are two childcare facilities in close proximity, at Brindabella Park and Majura Park.¹⁰

Committee comment

- 4.22 The Committee accepts that the AFP sought and considered the views of its staff in assessing the need for a child care facility in the project.

Construction traffic and site security

- 4.23 The AFP stated that construction traffic will have a minimal impact on local traffic networks.¹¹ The access and exit point for construction activities and traffic at the Majura site will be separate from the staff entry:

There is a side road adjoining Defence to the north of the property that we will use as the access point for all of the construction works.¹²

- 4.24 The AFP also affirmed that it would institute security measures to keep the construction and staff areas of the site separate:

We expect that the 300-odd workers, together with heavy vehicles and all the rest of it, can be quite quarantined from the AFP operations to the front of the property.

We are looking at the measures applicable there in terms of making sure that the areas that are construction zones are dedicated and zoned off accordingly [from the operational areas of the Majura Complex].¹³

Committee comment

- 4.25 The Committee accepts that the AFP has considered the traffic and security issues that surround construction on an operational site, and that the AFP will make arrangements to ensure that the construction activities do not impinge on the traffic flow or security of the Majura Complex.

10 Mr J. Slater, AFP, *transcript of evidence*, 8 February 2013, p. 5.

11 AFP, Submission 1, p. 31.

12 Mr J. Sawyers, AFP, *transcript of evidence*, 8 February 2013, p. 8.

13 Mr J. Sawyers, AFP, *transcript of evidence*, 8 February 2013, p. 8.

Final Committee comment

- 4.26 The Committee commends the AFP for its clear, comprehensive, accurate and succinct presentation of information in the submissions, private briefing, inspection, public hearing and in-camera hearing.
- 4.27 The Committee considers this inquiry to be an example of efficient and satisfactory participation in the inquiry process. In particular, the Committee appreciates the clear presentation of relevant information in a logical order to justify the need, scope and cost of the project.
- 4.28 Further, the Committee encourages other proponent agencies to use the AFP's experience as an excellent example of how to proceed with an inquiry.
- 4.29 The Committee found that the new facility has been designed to enable more efficient business processes. The Committee acknowledges that the new facility will increase the capabilities of the AFP.
- 4.30 The Committee met many AFP personnel during the briefing and inspection and thanks them for their contributions to the inquiry.
- 4.31 The Committee was satisfied with the evidence provided by the AFP regarding the proposed new forensic facility at Majura, ACT. The Committee is satisfied that the project has merit in terms of need, scope and cost.
- 4.32 Having regard to its role and responsibilities contained in the *Public Works Committee Act 1969*, the Committee is of the view that this project signifies value for money for the Commonwealth and constitutes a project which is fit for purpose, having regard to the established need.

Recommendation 2

The Committee recommends that the House of Representatives resolve, pursuant to Section 18(7) of the *Public Works Committee Act 1969*, that it is expedient to carry out the following proposed work: Australian Federal Police proposed new forensic facility at Majura, ACT.