

Community consultation process

Introduction

- 7.1 In its submission to the Committee, the Department of Defence (DoD) advised that land use planning for the site commenced at public meetings in November 1996 at which publicly elected members of the community were invited to join a Community Reference Group (CRG).¹ The CRG met on 14 occasions over a 12 month period culminating in the submission to North Sydney Council in December 1997 of an application seeking consent for residential development on the site.² The DoD also advised that a range of newsletters, technical planning consultations, media releases, and a site open day were arranged to keep the community informed of planning progress.³
- 7.2 The DoD intends that the community consultation program will continue throughout the demolition and remediation works.⁴ The stated objectives of the program include:
- promote environmental benefits of the clean up;
 - keep community informed of project status;
 - establish mechanisms for feedback from community; and
 - provide appropriate for community input.⁵

1 Evidence, p. 12.

2 Evidence, p. 12.

3 Evidence, p. 12.

4 Evidence, p. 13.

- 7.3 The DoD advised the Committee that its public consultation objectives will be achieved using a variety of techniques, including:
- newspaper advertisements/media releases;
 - site office open door policy and open house days;
 - attendance at local community/precinct meetings;
 - direct contact via a telephone info-line; and
 - regular briefings to Federal/State MP and local Councillors.⁶

Adequacy of consultation process

7.4 Despite the efforts of the DoD to advertise its intentions and include the community in the planning process, the Committee received evidence challenging the adequacy of the proposed consultation processes.⁷

7.5 One of the criticisms received by the Committee was that:

The PCPC (Platypus Combined Precincts Committee) notes that the mechanisms described in Paras. 44 and 45 do not include for any "action process" to correct matters of complaint and that the DEO proposes that the remediation Contractor self-regulate which actual experience shows to be totally inadequate and which therefore the PCPC opposes strenuously.⁸

7.6 The Committee noted that the DoD in its submission to the Committee gave as one of the objectives of the proposed consultation process to 'establish mechanisms for feedback from community'⁹. However, other documentation provided by the DoD to the Committee gave as an objective a complaint-response mechanism in order that complaints concerning the work can be effectively and efficiently addressed.¹⁰

7.7 The Committee is strongly of the view that it is an essential element of Defence's role in public works such as that proposed at the former *HMAS*

5 Evidence, p. 14.

6 Evidence, p. 14.

7 Evidence, pp. 77, 91 and 95.

8 Evidence, p. 77.

9 Evidence, p. 14.

10 Exhibit 13, p. 145.

Platypus site, to involve and include in the works process the wider community.

- 7.8 The Committee is strongly supportive of the establishment of a complaint-response mechanism, particularly as the works have the potential to effect the amenity of nearby residents.
- 7.9 The Committee is of the opinion that the establishment of a complaint-response mechanism would both give greater legitimacy to the agencies actions and facilitate the projects implementation and minimise community disturbance.

Recommendation 6

- 7.10 **The Committee recommends that the Department of Defence consider establishing a web site for the purposes of keeping the community informed of the project's status, promoting the benefits of the project and facilitating the project's implementation.**

Recommendation 7

- 7.11 **The Committee recommends that the Department of Defence establish a complaint-response mechanism in order that complaints concerning the proposed works can be effectively and efficiently addressed.**