

Introduction

Referral of Work

- 1.1 On 24 June 2004 the proposal to develop a new collection storage facility for the National Library of Australia at Hume, ACT, was referred to the Public Works Committee for consideration and report to the Parliament in accordance with the provisions of the *Public Works Committee Act 1969* (the Act).¹ On 6 December 2004 the work was re-referred. The proponent agency for this work is the National Library of Australia (NLA).
- 1.2 The Hon Peter Slipper, MP, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Finance and Administration, advised the House that the estimated cost of the proposed works was \$9.9 million. Mr Slipper noted further that, subject to Parliamentary approval, construction of the facility would commence in April 2005, with completion and occupation expected by March 2006.

Background

- 1.3 The NLA is a major national collecting institution with a statutory obligation to maintain and develop a collection of library material relevant to the Australian people.²
- 1.4 The NLA currently houses some 9 million items. Over the past six years, the collection has been growing at an average annual rate of 2 per cent.³

1 Extract from the Votes and Proceedings of the House of Representatives, No. 184, Thursday, 24 June 2004

2 Appendix C, Submission No. 1, paragraph 1

3 ib id, paragraph 37

- 1.5 The NLA’s legislative obligations in respect of building and facilitating access to a national library collection are set out in the *National Library Act 1960* (Section 6)⁴. In addition to this, the NLA’s Service Charter specifies that the library strives to:

“...deliver 90 per cent of items requested from an off-site store from within 90 minutes of courier cut-off times.”⁵

- 1.6 Currently, the NLA has storage facilities at:
- the main library building in Parkes, ACT;
 - Hume Warehouse repository at Hume, ACT; and
 - Hume Annexe repository, also at Hume, ACT.⁶

The Site

- 1.7 It is proposed that the new storage facility will be constructed on ACT land at Block 7, Section 1, Hume, ACT (one of Canberra’s three industrial suburbs). The site is presently being used by the ACT Government for the temporary storage of road base.⁷
- 1.8 It is anticipated that the site will be acquired through a Direct Sale of Land process.⁸ The site is yet to be released for sale,⁹ however the NLA has applied to the ACT Land Development Agency for the direct sale of the lease on the land, conditional upon Public Works Committee approval of the works proposal.¹⁰

Inquiry Process

- 1.9 The Committee is required by the Act to consider public works over \$6 million¹¹ 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;

4 Appendix C, Submission No. 1, paragraph 22

5 ib id, paragraph 24

6 ib id, paragraphs 15 – 21

7 Appendix C, Submission No. 1, Executive Summary and paragraph 59

8 ib id, paragraph 62

9 ib id, Executive Summary

10 ib id, paragraph 63

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

- 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.¹²
- 1.10 The Committee called for submissions by advertising the inquiry in *The Canberra Times* on Saturday 3 July 2004. 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.

Inspections and Public Hearing

- 1.11 The Committee travelled to the Hume site and inspected at first hand the scope and environs of the proposed works. A public hearing was held at Parliament House in Canberra on 13 August 2004.

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

