

Issues and Conclusions

Amendment to the Statement of Evidence

- 3.1 At the commencement of the hearing Defence proposed the following amendment to paragraph 51 of its main submission:

The development of the passive augmentation also requires the relocation of the existing Leichhardt Gate. The proposed location for the new gate is within the boundaries of RAAF Base Amberley. However the proposed southern access road requires the purchase of a small portion of land in order to maintain safe road design for the intersection of Behms Road and Old Toowoomba Road.¹

Background

- 3.2 This current project is the third stage in the redevelopment of RAAF Base Amberley. Stage 1 was the subject of a Committee report to Parliament in 1998 that addressed the requirement for a general upgrade of the facilities that needed to be undertaken in order to enhance operational, training, aircraft maintenance, logistics support and aircraft maintenance facilities,

¹ Appendix D, Official Transcript of Evidence, page 2.

improvements and upgrading of engineering services, and the demolition of redundant facilities.²

- 3.3 Stage 2 was the subject of Committee inquiry in 2005 that focussed primarily on the development of facilities associated with the introduction of new Multi Role Tanker Transport (MRTT) aircraft, and other related infrastructure works as well as considering works that built on the earlier Stage 1 proposal.³

Project Overview

- 3.4 In its introductory statement to the Committee at the public hearing, Defence stated that the department's long term planning provides for:

...the growth of RAAF Base Amberley through the introduction of a number of aircraft capabilities such as the C17 heavy lift aircraft and the recently announced FA-18 Super Hornet. In addition to air capabilities, RAAF Base Amberley will accommodate army units such as the 9th Force Support Battalion, whose facilities have been developed under the RAAF Base Amberley Redevelopment Stage 2 project.⁴

- 3.5 According to Defence, the current project is required for the following reasons:

- to provide new and refurbished facilities;
- to establish a more logical and coherent distribution of land use;
- to overcome functional and OH&S deficiencies; and,
- to allow for clearance of future flight line real estate to support future capabilities.⁵

2 Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works Redevelopment of Facilities at RAAF Base Amberley, Qld, Fifth Report of 1998.

3 Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works Redevelopment of Facilities at RAAF Base Amberley Stage 2, Qld, Eighteenth Report of 2005.

4 Appendix D, page 2.

5 loc.cit.

Trainee Accommodation

- 3.6 The Committee, in noting that the existing trainee accommodation is sited in proximity to the flight line and affected by high levels of aircraft noise, was interested in why this accommodation, now to be demolished, was located on this site, and when it was initially built.⁶
- 3.7 Defence informed the Committee that the current trainee living in accommodation was built in the early 1960s when RAAF Base Amberley was smaller with reduced operational activity, and the types of aircraft operating from the base different to those of today. Based on the operating environment of Amberley at that time the siting of trainee accommodation was probably the correct choice.
- 3.8 Defence went on to say that those buildings, now over 30 years old - and in some instances over 40 years old - were now unviable, and the redevelopment proposed under Stage 3 afforded the opportunity to replace facilities that had passed their economic life and were too costly to retain, and to relocate replacement buildings to more appropriate areas of the base.⁷
- 3.9 The Project Director for the redevelopment of Amberley informed the Committee that trainee accommodation would be relocated to the living and domestic precinct of the base consistent with the long-term planning arrangements for Amberley.⁸
- 3.10 Subsequent to the hearing, Defence informed the Committee that RAAF Base Amberley does not currently have any Level 3 living-in accommodation, and that this will be provided under the current project arrangements. A total of 160 Level 3 accommodation rooms will be built distributed across five accommodation blocks of 32 rooms each to a maximum of 4,909 square metres.⁹

6 Appendix C, Submission No. 1, paragraph 21 and Appendix D, loc.cit.

7 Appendix D, page 3.

8 loc.cit.

9 Letter to the Chair from Brigadier W. Grice, Director General Infrastructure Asset Development, dated 8 August 2007.

Fuel Storage Facilities

- 3.11 The Committee noted that under the scope of works for Stage 3 of Amberley redevelopment, the demolition of the existing fuel store was proposed. Defence was asked to provide an overview of the reason the facility is to be demolished, and whether the site would need to be remediated.¹⁰
- 3.12 Defence explained that there were two fuel farms on the base. Fuel Farm 1, the facility to be removed, was constructed over 40 years ago to specifications exigent at the time but which would not comply with current standards for this type of facility. While Fuel Farm 1 was located on a site which at the time was appropriate, with the increase in operational activity at Amberley the siting of the facility is now unsuitable for fuel storage. As result of the combination of a sub-standard storage depot in an inappropriate location, the facility was decommissioned in 2006.¹¹
- 3.13 Fuel Farm 2 is of more recent construction and is located some distance from the flight line and compliant with current standards. This facility will be retained and reused, and its capacity supplemented with additional fuel storage that will be built adjacent to it.¹²
- 3.14 Defence informed the Committee that following the demolition and removal of Fuel Farm 1, the site would be cleared of soil contamination. This will entail the excavation of the soil surrounding the site to allow the natural bacteria to break down hydrocarbon contamination. Under the description of 'land farming' this permits the treatment of contaminated soil on site.¹³ Treatment of the soil through bacteria has the advantage of allowing the base environment management system to track and monitor any contaminated soil that may need to be removed and relocated elsewhere on base.¹⁴

10 Appendix D, page 3.

11 loc.cit.

12 ibid., page 4.

13 loc.cit.

14 ibid., page 5.

Recommendation 1

The Committee recommends that in the event that there is contamination found to be present on the site of Fuel Farm 1, Defence take all appropriate action to quarantine the site or proceed with decontamination, putting into place appropriate safeguards for such works, and advise the Committee of the action taken.

- 3.15 However, Defence acknowledged that it had not yet made an assessment of the level of soil contamination surrounding Fuel Farm 1, but proposes to undertake a stage 2 contamination study with test pits and bores to ascertain the extent of any hydrocarbon contamination, followed by appropriate action depending on the levels of contamination found. Should the extent of contamination be beyond acceptable levels, soil will be removed from the site to a registered landfill. Defence further informed the Committee that all decontamination and remediation work will be supervised by licensed professionals to ensure that it complies with all Commonwealth and state regulatory practices for the removal of contaminated soil.¹⁵
- 3.16 In response to the Committee's query as to whether the removal and disposal of soil would be the subject of audit, Defence confirmed that an audit process would be undertaken by professional personnel, independent of the contractor doing the work to ensure compliance with both Commonwealth and state regulations.¹⁶

Recommendation 2

The Committee recommends that Defence provide details of the level of hydrocarbon contamination found on the site of Fuel Farm 1 following its demolition, and that it furnish a report on how contamination was ultimately processed, and whether any contaminated soil was removed from the site, including details of additional costs incurred associated with disposal.

15 *ibid.*, page 4.

16 *loc.cit.*

Master Planning and Future Developments

3.17 At paragraph 80 of the Defence Submission, the department states that each of the project elements will be constructed on sites consistent with RAAF Base Amberley Zone and Precinct Plan. The Submission goes on to state that:

Relocating non-essential services, such the Maintenance Equipment and Operations Maintenance Section, living-in accommodation, dental services and Headquarters Combat Support Group will clear valuable flight-line space for future development in accordance with the RAAF Base Amberley Zone and Precinct Plan.

3.18 The Committee sought assurances from Defence that the master planning phase associated with delivery of the project had been sufficiently rigorous to provide some assurance of a reasonable project life against a background of the considerable outlay of Commonwealth money.¹⁷

3.19 In responding, the department stated that as part of the processes associated with developing the project, there had been a rigorous zone planning process undertaken over a period of 18 months to ensure that the proposed works will address the long term requirements for Amberley. Apart from the base information systems centre and base command post hub which for cost reasons will remain at its present location, all other elements of the project will be located to areas of the base consistent with the master plan. Defence expressed its confidence that issues associated with life-span of new and refurbished buildings and long-term planning for the future use of RAAF Base Amberley have been considered.¹⁸

Base Infrastructure

Sewerage

3.20 The Committee questioned whether there would be an impact on base infrastructure following the completion of the proposed development, noting particularly the possible impact on the local sewerage infrastructure and its capacity to cope with any additional discharge.¹⁹

17 *ibid.*, page 5.

18 *ibid.*, page 6.

19 *ibid.*, page 8.

- 3.21 Defence recalled that as part of the previous development project of RAAF Base Amberley, considered by the Committee in 2005,²⁰ there was:
- ...an element of funding put aside to provide some interim remediation of our on-base sewerage farm until the long term plans of the surrounding community were known with regard to supplementing their waste water and sewerage treatment plant. We have done a cost-benefit analysis of several options and we have determined that in the long term it is more cost effective for both the Commonwealth and the surrounding community for us to join with the sewer authorities and eventually close the sewerage treatment plant on base and connect our sewerage system to the new Ipswich Water.²¹
- 3.22 Ipswich Water in evidence to the inquiry, supported the inclusion of RAAF Base Amberley in a widely-based water and sewerage infrastructure development proposed by the Ipswich City Council for the area. While this was a long-term strategy Ipswich Water was enthusiastic in the proposed sewerage line being developed that would include Amberley, as well as servicing the whole western corridor.²²
- 3.23 When the new infrastructure would become operable was not addressed, although Ipswich Water acknowledged that the federal government has 'earmarked \$400 million' for the scheme.²³

Water

- 3.24 The Committee acknowledged the extent of rainwater capture and reuse from new buildings, but was interested in the extent to which the base would still be reliant on the local water infrastructure.
- 3.25 Defence confirmed that it would still need to draw water from Ipswich Water, but at the same time it was conscious of the need for compliance with ecological sustainable development initiatives to reduce consumption which would include:²⁴
- all tap ware and fittings compliant with the Water Efficiency Labelling Standards (WELS) scheme to provide a minimum of a 3 Star water conservation rating;

20 RAAF Base Amberley Redevelopment Stage 2

21 Appendix D, page 8.

22 *ibid.*, page 14.

23 *ibid.*, page 15.

24 *ibid.*, page 9.

- pressure limiting valves to limit pressure at all appliances;
- provision for separate internal and external reticulation of cold water to all toilets and urinal flushing for future connection to non-potable water supply infrastructure;
- sub-metering of all major water supplies to each new building; as well as
- rainwater harvesting from all roof areas complete with storage tanks and pressure pumping to supply localised landscaping, wash down areas and toilet flushing.²⁵

3.26 Defence informed the Committee that it currently draws 420 – 430 megalitres of potable water from Ipswich Water. In responding to the Committee’s question as to whether this consumption could be reduced, Defence suggested that as a result of water saving initiatives consistent with the measures above, it was expecting to reduce water consumption by around 10 per cent and by a further 10 per cent from the collection of surface water run-off. In total, this represented a reduction of around 8 – 12 percent of total water consumption.²⁶

3.27 In evidence, Ipswich Water informed the Committee that the proposed water and sewerage infrastructure project would upgrade the water supply to RAAF Base Amberley through the development of a pipeline west of Ipswich as part of the Queensland Government’s purified, recycled water scheme. Once that project was commenced, RAAF Base Amberley could be connected, which according to the witness would provide:

A very unique opportunity to get a master-planned scheme to service this whole district.²⁷

3.28 Ipswich Water also informed the Committee that it had recently expended \$1 million to improve the water supply to RAAF Base Amberley, although it did state in the context of water saving initiatives that:

... there is a capacity in our system to supply their proposed demands based on current consumption rates, so any saving would obviously be of benefit and probably prolong duplication works for us.²⁸

25 Appendix C, paragraph 78.

26 Appendix D, page 9.

27 *ibid.*, page 15.

28 *ibid.*, page 16.

Recommendation 3

The Committee recommends that Defence provide details of water consumption rates at RAAF Base Amberley following completion of the current works, and the savings in water consumption that have been achieved.

Energy

- 3.29 The Committee sought comment from Defence relating to the delivery of power to RAAF Base Amberley; particularly whether the proposed redevelopment would have an impact on the existing power supply to the base, whether there was a need to upgrade the base substation, and whether Defence could assure the committee that the new buildings were energy efficient.²⁹
- 3.30 Defence informed the Committee that the existing 'Energex' substation commissioned as part of the Stage 2 redevelopment has a capacity of 33kVh that in addition to access to the main grid, will supply the base with sufficient energy resources to meet the demand of the new facilities.³⁰
- 3.31 Defence also stated that the adequacy of available power is achievable without additional upgrades because the proposed Stage 3 redevelopment will entail the replacement of existing facilities with minimal growth in the numbers of personnel that might otherwise increase the demand for energy.³¹
- 3.32 In terms of the energy efficiency of the new facilities Defence referred to its Statement of Evidence that stated:
- Each new building will be modelled to determine the predicted energy consumption and design targets will be determined for each building, depending on the building classification. Energy management is a key aspect in the design of the new facilities and the initiatives which will be included are:
- orientating the buildings to minimise east and west solar gain;
 - installing a Building Management System in each building, linked to the site wide Regional Utilities Management System where available;

29 *ibid.*, page 10.

30 *ibid.*, page 8.

31 Appendix D, page 10.

- in-building load control devices such as motion sensors where practical;
- natural ventilation and mixed mode systems wherever possible;
- installation of ceiling fans in selected areas to enhance comfort without the use of air conditioning;
- separate digital energy metering for tenanted areas, central services and computer (data) centres;
- energy efficient lighting (T5 fluorescent light fittings in office areas) supplemented by energy efficiency techniques such as occupancy sensing and after-hours automatic shut-off controls; and
- energy efficient appliances.³²

Environmental Issues

- 3.33 Defence stated in its submission to the inquiry that an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) had been prepared during the development of the project to determine the extent and nature of any environmental issues relating specifically to the project.³³ The Committee was interested in when the EIA had been completed and whether it had been validated by the Department of Environment and Water Resources (DEWR).³⁴
- 3.34 Defence confirmed that the DEWR had seen the final draft of the EIA and that there had been correspondence between the department and Defence prior to its finalisation in the week before the Committee's inquiry.³⁵
- 3.35 Continuing the environmental theme, the Committee sought details from Defence on the removal of a number of trees to make way for the proposed works.³⁶
- 3.36 In responding Defence stated that approximately 40 trees would need to be removed to enable the works to proceed, although the loss of these would not impact on the base flora. According to Defence, Stage 2 of the redevelopment of Amberley expended approximately \$1 million on revegetation of the site following completion of the works, as well as strengthening the Amberley koala corridor.³⁷

32 Appendix C, paragraph 77.

33 *ibid.*, paragraph 15.

34 Appendix D, page 11.

35 *loc.cit.*

36 *ibid.*, page 12.

37 *loc.cit.*

- 3.37 The Committee was subsequently informed that as part of the Stage 2 redevelopment a total of 54,000 plantings were provided including grasses, shrubs and trees, with works scheduled for completion by December 2007.³⁸

Heritage Buildings

- 3.38 In regard to the issue of heritage buildings in the context of buildings to be demolished, Defence confirmed that those buildings with a heritage interest would be retained. The most significant of these was the officer's mess that had been identified as suitable for adaptive reuse. Another of the heritage assets to be retained were the Bellman hangers one of which had recently been converted internally to allow it to be used for warehousing.³⁹
- 3.39 In its submission to the inquiry Defence stated that it had commissioned a heritage assessment during the initial planning phases associated with the current proposal, and although concluding that a referral under the *Environmental Protection Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* was not required,⁴⁰ the department had corresponded with the Department of Environment and Water Resources, notifying it of the proposed works at Amberley.
- 3.40 Subsequent to the inquiry Defence provided a copy of a letter from DEWR which in the context of recording heritage buildings, the department observed:

... while the demolition of two heritage listed buildings is unlikely to diminish the heritage values of the site overall, the demolition of small numbers of heritage listed buildings over successive stages of redevelopment has the potential to have a significant cumulative impact. Planning for future redevelopment should take this into account.⁴¹

38 Letter to the Chair from Brigadier W. Grice, Director General Infrastructure Asset Development, dated 27 July 2007.

39 Appendix D, page 7.

40 loc.cit.

41 Letter to Mr Rick Zentelis, Director Heritage and Biodiversity Conservation, Department of Defence from Ms Veronica Blazely Acting Assistant Secretary, Heritage Management Branch, Department of Environment and Water Resources dated 11 July 2007.

Land Acquisition

3.41 Defence notes in its Submission to the inquiry that:

The relocation of the Amberley State Primary School is required to implement the Passive Defence Augmentation. Defence plans to acquire the land and existing buildings following the relocation of the school. The land has been zoned future development in the RAAF Base Amberley Zone and Precinct Plan. The acquisition of the land is not part of this proposal.⁴²

3.42 To compensate the local community for the loss of the school, the federal government announced that it would be providing funding up to \$26.8 million as a contribution towards a replacement school for the Amberley community. The new school will provide places for 330 students and out of school care for 60 students. Its location will be the subject of advice to the Australian Government from the Queensland Government.⁴³

3.43 In amending its Statement of Evidence to the inquiry Defence indicated that it proposed to purchase additional land at the intersection of Old Toowoomba road and Behms Road in order to permit road works to cater for increased traffic flows.⁴⁴

3.44 Defence subsequently informed the Committee that while the negotiations for the acquisition of the land have not been completed, an estimate based on the cost of acquiring the land (1.66 hectares) and the costs associated with the reconfiguration of the intersection had been included in the estimated cost of the proposed works.⁴⁵

42 Appendix C, paragraph 51.

43 Howard J (Prime Minister) 2007, *Amberley State School*, media release, Amberley, Queensland 27 June.

44 Appendix D, page 2. See also paragraph 3.1 above.

45 Letter to the Chair from Brigadier W. Grice, Director General Infrastructure Asset Development, dated 8 August 2007.

Recommendation 4

The Committee recommends that Defence provide the final cost to the Commonwealth for the acquisition of land that will enable the reconfiguration of the intersection of the Old Toowoomba Road and Behms Road when the purchase is finalised.

Community Impact

- 3.45 The impact of the proposed developments at RAAF Base Amberley was touched on in its reference in the Statement of Evidence to the relocation of the Amberley State Primary School. However it was apparent to the Committee that there were a number of issues of concern to the local community that may not have been adequately addressed.
- 3.46 The Committee received informal representations from the community of Willowbank, Amberley and surrounding areas relating to:
- the community kindergarten;
 - the Amberley toy library;
 - the Amberley play group; and
 - the Amberley Post Office.
- 3.47 While the interest group associated with these facilities was not represented at the inquiry, it was apparent from the concerns expressed that these facilities, currently on Commonwealth land, would be lost to the local community when the land was resumed under the current project. Of particular concern was when some of the facilities were first established – for example the kindergarten was established in 1953 – and was available to both the local community as well as families located on base. According to the community interest group, closure of the kindergarten would be detrimental to the children of local families.
- 3.48 The Committee was informed by Defence, again informally, that ongoing community discussions were underway that were aimed at briefing the local community on the project. This forum would continue in order to assure the local community that its interests were being considered. According to Defence the matter of community access to the Post Office had been resolved and that once the planning for the new school was begun, other facilities, including the kindergarten may well be

incorporated. However, a decision along these lines was one to be taken by the Queensland Department of Education Training and the Arts.

Project Cost

- 3.49 The estimated out-turn cost of this project is \$331.5 million (excluding GST). This cost estimate includes the construction costs, management and design fees, furniture, fittings and equipment, contingencies and an escalation allowance.

Recommendation 5

The Committee recommends that the proposed RAAF Base Amberley Redevelopment Stage 3 proceed at an estimated cost of \$331.5 million.

Hon Judi Moylan MP
Chair
13 September 2007

