

Introduction

Referral of Work

- 1.1 On 14 September 2005 the proposed fit-out of new leased premises for the Australian Customs Service at 1010 LaTrobe Street, Melbourne Docklands, 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).¹ The proponent agency for this work is the Australian Customs Service (Customs).
- 1.2 The Hon Dr Sharman Stone MP, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Finance and Administration, advised the House that the estimated cost of the proposed works was \$12.5 million. Subject to parliamentary approval, the proposed fit-out and associated installation of services will, to the maximum extent possible, be integrated with the base building structure in order to reduce costs. The building is planned for completion in December 2006, and Customs anticipates occupying the building progressively throughout February and March 2007.

Background

Australian Customs Service

- 1.3 The Australian Customs Service has three principal roles:

¹ Extract from the *Votes and Proceedings of the House of Representatives*, No. 57, Wednesday 14 September 2005

- to facilitate trade and the movement of people across the Australian border while protecting the community and maintaining appropriate compliance with Australian law;
- to collect Customs revenue; and
- to administer specific industry schemes and trade measures.²

Location

- 1.4 Customs has occupied its current headquarters at 414 LaTrobe Street since 1992, and has a net lease due to expire on 31 May 2007. Customs is seeking to relocate its headquarters to premises currently being constructed at 1010 LaTrobe Street, Melbourne Docklands, also known as the Port 1010 Building.³

Inquiry Process

- 1.5 The Committee is required by the Act to consider public works over \$6 million⁴ 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.⁵

- 1.6 The Committee called for submissions by advertising the inquiry in *The Age* on Saturday, 8 October 2005. 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.

2 Appendix C, Submission No. 1, paragraph 1.2.2

3 *ibid*, paragraph 1.2.4

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

5 *ibid*, Section 17

Inspection and Public Hearing

- 1.7 On 11 November 2005 the Committee visited Customs' existing headquarters and inspected the site and environs of the proposed works. A confidential briefing from Customs and a public hearing was conducted in Melbourne later that day.⁶

6 See Appendix D for the official Hansard transcript of the evidence taken by the Committee at the public hearing on Friday, 11 November 2005 in Melbourne, Vic.