

## The wharf

### Introduction

8.1 Located on the foreshore boundary of the former *HMAS Platypus* site is a wharf of 213 metres in length and 14 metres in width.<sup>1</sup> The wharf structure was built in the latter part of the 1960's and is of reinforced concrete construction with timber fendering.<sup>2</sup> The wharf was constructed by the Department of Defence (DoD) on the harbour seabed and is leased from the New South Wales Waterways Authority.<sup>3</sup>

### Condition of the wharf

8.2 In 1997 the DoD engaged the firm of Patterson Britton & Partners to undertake a detailed assessment of the wharf and seawall to establish:

- the current condition of the wharf and seawall;
- costs and requirements for ongoing maintenance of the wharf and seawall;
- the structural relationship between the seawall and the wharf; and
- the feasibility of structural modifications such as cutting out sections of the wharf, creating a small inlet and lowering the deck.<sup>4</sup>

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1 Evidence, p. 8 and Exhibit 19, p. 1.

2 Exhibit 19, p. 1.

3 Evidence, p. 8.

4 Exhibit 19, p. 1.

- 8.3 In respect to the condition of the wharf and seawall and requirements for remedial work, the findings of the investigation included:
- overall, the concrete deck was found to be in reasonable conditions;
  - concrete piles have significant zones of deterioration;
  - approximately one third of the timber fender piles, wales, rubber fenders and associated steel fittings have deteriorated and should be replaced; and
  - the seawall is in generally good conditions but requires some maintenance to rectify the effects of weathering.<sup>5</sup>
- 8.4 The investigation estimated that the costs of repairs to the wharf and seawall at \$1.020 million.<sup>6</sup> The costs for ongoing maintenance was estimated, on average, to be approximately \$33,000 per annum.<sup>7</sup>

## Future of the wharf

- 8.5 Concerns were raised by witnesses at the public hearing about the future of the wharf at the former *HMAS Platypus* site.<sup>8</sup> At the public hearing the Committee questioned Defence as to its intentions, in conjunction with the New South Wales Waterways Authority's, regarding the wharf. The DoD advised:

All I can say at this stage is that it has not been included as part of the remediation project. As far as Defence goes, it is looking at the wharf on a month-to-month basis. The state government, particularly during the Olympics, expressed a very strong desire for it to remain, even though it does not at this point in time have a future use. We have proposed a number of alternatives as to how that could exist under the New South Wales Waterways Authority. It is not something that Defence wants to maintain. It wants to get out of owning wharves around Sydney Harbour against properties it will not own.<sup>9</sup>

- 8.6 The DoD also advised the Committee that:

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5 Exhibit 19, p. 24.

6 Exhibit 19, p. 24.

7 Exhibit 19, p. 24.

8 Evidence, pp. 82, 103 and 107.

9 Evidence, p. 150.

We have an estimate in the order of \$750,000 of the cost of doing it up [the wharf] to a condition where you could pass it on to someone. ... at the time we were in court with council, we in fact proposed a refurbishment of the wharf to bring it up to the current day's standards and then to establish a sinking fund over 20 years where the maintenance of it was something like \$50,000 a year over that time. Defence was going to set up the sinking fund, but we were asked to withdraw the application from the North Sydney Council. They did not want the long-term liability of it.

- 8.7 The Committee is of the view that the future of the wharf at former HMAS Platypus is a significant issue which has yet to be resolved by the DoD. While the Committee acknowledges that an outcome with respect to this issue is to some extent dependent on the position of the New South Wales Waterways Authority, it is of the view that the DoD is proceeding on the one hand with the development of one aspect of the site, but has yet to finalise the future of another aspect of the site.
- 8.8 The Committee is strongly of the view that the future of the wharf should be resolved as quickly as possible, in particular as it is a cost aspect that has the potential to create a significant liability for the Commonwealth. Further, the Committee agrees that a failure to resolve quickly the future of the wharf is likely to result in its demolition.

### **Recommendation 8**

- 8.9 **The Committee recommends that the Department of Defence:**
- **continue discussions with the New South Wales Waterways Authority as to the future of the wharf at former *HMAS Platypus* with a view to resolving the issue as quickly as possible; and**
  - **provide the Committee, within 12 months, with a report detailing Department of Defence plans with respect to the future of the wharf at former *HMAS Platypus*.**