



Appendix A

Article in the *Townsville Bulletin* dated 5 February 2010



HOMING IN ... there will be no delay in the transfer of 3RAR to Townsville despite the housing shortage

Bungle delays troop housing

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THE Defence Department is to spend \$19 million on transportable dongas to house troops because of a bungle in providing new accommodation at bases such as Lavarack Barracks, federal MP Peter Lindsay said yesterday.

Meanwhile, the department last night confirmed delays of up to 18 months would occur in providing its Single Living Environment and Accommodation Precinct (LEAP) project but denied troops would be housed in dongas.

Mr Lindsay raised the claims after Defence was called to a Public Works committee in Canberra yesterday to explain why the Single LEAP project had not proceeded despite funding approvals having been passed more than two years ago.

Mr Lindsay said it was an utter disgrace.

"Some soldiers will be living in dongas for three years," he said.

"Defence calls it an interim solution, (but) it's a pretty ordinary solution."

Under the Single LEAP phase two project, there was a requirement for 540 extra living accommodation units at Lavarack Barracks. Some of the units were required for up to 700 soldiers from Sydney's 3RAR due to relocate to Townsville and occupy their lines at Lavarack Barracks from the beginning of 2012.

The units were part of 3535 rooms at 17 Defence sites around Australia to be provided under public/private partnership arrangements and were to be ready to start in 2010 and fully delivered in 2012.

Mr Lindsay said he had been told the relocation of 3RAR was going ahead but that the Single LEAP project would not be delivered until April 2013.

He said the Public Works committee reported to Parliament, approving the works, in June 2007.

"Here we are in 2010 and no tender has yet been let," he said.

Mr Lindsay said tenders were called and four tenderers were shortlisted but that the global financial crisis intervened, delaying the plans.

He said Defence had now decided to recall tenders.

"It could have internally funded the project (but) Defence has chosen not to go down that route and chosen to accept long delays," he said.

"You won't see Single LEAP phase two buildings at Lavarack until April 2013."

He said Defence would spend \$19 million on dongas - \$9 million at Townsville and \$10 million at the Edinburgh defence precinct in South Australia for the 7th Battalion.

"They are going to expect soldiers to live in dongas until April 2013," he said. "I really don't think that's acceptable. It's an utter disgrace, but more than that, our construction industry misses out on the current work because of these delays."

A Defence spokesman said procurement action was under way for Single LEAP phase two at Lavarack Barracks.

"Defence is getting cracking on the project," the spokesman said.

"Possibly there will be a delay that could last up to 18 months but hopefully it will be less.

"During this time appropriate quality arrangements will be in place for service personnel.

"It will not be dongas."

The spokesman said there would not be a delay in the transfer of 3RAR to Townsville.