
The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia

**Construction of mixed
residential dwellings at
Block 87, Section 24,
Stirling, ACT**

Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works

9 November 2000
Canberra

© Commonwealth of Australia 2000

ISBN [Click **here** and type ISBN Number]

Contents

Membership of the Committee.....	v
Extract from the Votes and Proceedings of the House of Representatives	vii
List of abbreviations.....	ix
List of recommendations.....	xi
Executive summary	xiii

REPORT

1	Introduction.....	1
	Inquiry process.....	1
	Scope of the proposal.....	2
	The cost.....	3
	Timing.....	3
	The Defence Housing Authority.....	4
	Weston Creek, ACT	4
	Announcement of proposed development	5
2	The need for the work	7
	DHA rationale.....	7
	Alternatives	7
	Consideration by the Committee	8
	Alternative sites.....	8
	Direct purchase from private property market.....	9
	Defence force housing requirement.....	9
	Survey of customer requirements	11

Australian Defence College (ADC).....	11
3 Engineering and environmental issues.....	15
Engineering.....	15
Cost of remediation.....	16
Environmental issues	16
4 Consultation.....	19
Introduction.....	19
Community consultation	20
5 Traffic issues.....	23
General	23
New proposal.....	23
Community support	24
6 Community views	25

APPENDICES

Appendix A—Witnesses.....	27
Appendix B—List of Submissions	29
Appendix C—Associated Drawings	31
Appendix D—Traffic Control Devices Concept Plan Roundabouts Option	45



Membership of the Committee

Chair Hon Judi Moylan MP

Deputy Chair Hon Janice Crosio MBE, MP

Members **House of Representatives**

Mr John Forrest MP

Mr Colin Hollis MP

Mr Peter Lindsay MP

Mr Bernie Ripoll MP

Senate

Senator Paul Calvert

Senator Alan Ferguson

Senator Shayne Murphy

Sectional Committee

Chair Mr Peter Lindsay MP

Members **House of Representatives**

Mr John Forrest MP

Mr Bernie Ripoll MP

Senate

Senator Shayne Murphy

Committee Secretariat

Secretary Mr Trevor Rowe

Inquiry Secretary Mr Ian Ireland

Administrative Officers Mrs Angela Nagy



Extract from the Votes and Proceedings of the House of Representatives

No. 126, dated Thursday, 29 June 2000

38. PUBLIC WORKS—PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE— REFERENCE OF WORK—CONSTRUCTION OF MIXED DWELLINGS AT BLOCK 87, SECTION 24, STIRLING, ACT

Mr Slipper (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Finance and Administration), by leave, moved—That, in accordance with the provisions of the *Public Works Committee Act 1969*, the following proposed work be referred to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works for consideration and report: Construction of mixed residential dwellings at Block 87, Section 24, Stirling, ACT.

Question-put and passed.



List of abbreviations

ACT	Australian Capital Territory
ADC	Australian Defence College
ADF	Australian Defence Force
DHA	Defence Housing Authority



List of recommendations

Recommendation 1

The Committee recommends that agencies notify the Committee, at the earliest opportunity, of purchases, or commitments for purchases, of land intended for a development which may be referred to the Committee prior to referral of the development to the Committee by the Parliament.

Recommendation 2

The Committee recommends that in respect to future DHA projects referred to the Committee, submissions contain detailed defence housing requirement data and a detailed methodological explanation for the data.

Recommendation 3

The Committee recommends that DHA and/or the Department of Defence conduct ongoing surveys of Defence personnel to ascertain accommodation preferences and needs.

Recommendation 4

The Committee recommends in respect to future DHA projects referred to the Committee, submissions contain details of accommodation preference surveys and the methodology relating to the particular survey.

Recommendation 5

The Committee recommends that the Department of Defence make DHA a party, at the earliest opportunity, to all discussions which may impact on ADF personnel housing requirements.

Recommendation 6

The Committee recommends that DHA take all reasonable steps to ensure that as many existing trees as is practical are preserved.

Recommendation 7

The Committee recommends that DHA hold community meetings prior to the projects completion to facilitate project implementation and minimise community disturbance.

Recommendation 8

The Committee recommends that the proposed construction of mixed residential dwellings at Block 87, Section 24, Stirling, ACT, proceed at an estimated cost of \$11.5 million.



Executive summary

- 1.1 On 29 June 2000, the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works was referred the Construction of Mixed Residential Dwellings, Block 87, Section 24, Stirling, ACT for consideration and report to Parliament. The Committee has recommended that the proposed development proceed.
- 1.2 The proposed development, the estimated cost of which is \$11.5 million, will comprise 50 detached and semi-detached dwellings. The sponsoring agency, the Defence Housing Authority (DHA), proposes that, subject to parliamentary approval, the proposed dwellings will be available for occupation by the end of June 2001.
- 1.3 While the Committee supports the proposed development, the inquiry raised a number of process related issues that the Committee is of the view need to be addressed. The Committee's statutory task of determining the need for the proposed development was made difficult by inconsistencies in evidence provided to the Committee by DHA in its submission, at the public hearing and on notice. To enable the Committee to carry out its statutory obligations in a efficient, objective and transparent manner, the Committee recommended that future DHA submissions to the Committee contain detailed defence housing requirement data and a methodology for the data.
- 1.4 The Committee was concerned that DHA had not surveyed its customers in relation to the proposed dwellings. The Committee strongly endorses the use of surveys as a means of establishing client preferences. The Committee recommends that DHA and or the Department of Defence conduct ongoing surveys of ADF personnel to ascertain accommodation needs.

- 1.5 The inquiry process also highlighted a number of deficiencies in the liaison process between the Department of Defence and DHA, particularly in relation to the Australian Defence College. The Committee recommends that the Department of Defence make DHA a party, at the earliest opportunity, to all discussion which may impact on ADF personnel housing requirements.
- 1.6 The soil on the proposed site for the development is unstable and will require remediation. The cost of the remediation will be met by the ACT Government. The Committee was concerned that the proposed development would result in the removal of many mature and semi-mature native trees. The Committee recommends that DHA take all reasonable steps to ensure that as many existing trees as is practical are preserved.
- 1.7 The Committee received evidence challenging the sincerity and adequacy of the consultation process engaged in by DHA. The Committee is strongly of the view that it is an essential element of DHA's role in developments such as that proposed at Stirling, to involve and include in the development process the wider community. Such involvement gives greater legitimacy to the agencies actions. The Committee considers that it would have been preferable had DHA's community consultation process been more transparent and recommended that DHA hold further community meetings.

Introduction

Inquiry process

- 1.1 On 29 June 2000, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Finance and Administration referred the proposal for the construction of Mixed Residential Dwellings, Block 87, Section 24, Stirling ACT, to the Standing Committee on Public Works, for consideration and report to Parliament, in accordance with the provisions of the *Public Works Committee Act 1969*.¹
- 1.2 The Committee sought submissions for the inquiry by advertising the proposed work in *The Canberra Time* on 1 July 2000 and *The Australian* on 6 July 2000.
- 1.3 Letters seeking submissions were sent also to Commonwealth and Territory agencies, Federal and Territory government representatives, and a range of peak organisations, professional bodies and individuals representing various interest groups, likely to have an interest in the Inquiry.
- 1.4 On 18 August 2000, the Committee, accompanied by Mr Simon Corbell MLA and Mr Ted Quinlan MLA, inspected the site for the proposed development and was briefed by the Defence Housing Authority (DHA) and Department of Defence representatives.
- 1.5 Following the inspection of the site for the proposed development, the Committee took evidence at a public hearing conducted at Parliament

1 The Hon. Peter Slipper MP, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Finance and Administration, House of Representatives *Debates*, p. 18657, 29 June 2000.

House, Canberra, ACT. A list of witnesses who appeared at the public hearing is at Appendix A and list of submissions at Appendix B.²

Scope of the proposal

- 1.6 The proposed site for the development is identified as Block 87, Section 24, Division of Stirling, ACT. The proposed site is located to the east of Streeton Drive and between the junctions of Darwinia Terrace and Bangalay Crescent, Stirling, ACT.³
- 1.7 The proposed site measures approximately 28,762 m².⁴ The site boundaries are defined by:
- the existing road reserve of Streeton Drive to the west;
 - the top of a bank of an existing floodway reserve which traverses the eastern boundary in a northerly direction;
 - a sports playing field located to the north of the proposed site; and
 - two water supply mains located to the south.⁵
- 1.8 The proposed site is located in an area of parkland which is part of what is known as the Stirling Oval precinct. The proposed site has significant landscape features, namely, established grass and numerous trees, both immature and mature.
- 1.9 The proposed development will comprise 50 dwellings consisting of the following:
- 8 detached residences with 3 bedrooms plus study of around 165m²;
 - 14 courtyard houses with 3 bedroom plus study of around 150m²;
 - 21 townhouses with 3 bedrooms plus study of around 150m²;
 - 7 two storey townhouses with 2 bedrooms plus study of around 140m².⁶
- 1.10 DHA will remediate the site.⁷ Garaging, undercover outdoor living areas, visitor carparking, a common public area, telecommunications outlets, internal access roads, a footpath and landscaping will also be provided.⁸

2 The Committee's proceedings will be printed as Minutes of Evidence.

3 Defence Housing Authority (DHA) Submission, 4 July 2000, p. 11.

4 DHA Submission, 4 July 2000, p. 11.

5 DHA Submission, 4 July 2000, pp. 11 and 12.

6 DHA Submission, 4 July 2000, p. 6.

The cost

- 1.11 The estimated cost of the proposed development is \$11.5 million at February 2000 prices.⁹ The cost of the proposed development includes construction costs, civil works, headworks charges, contingency and professional fees.¹⁰
- 1.12 A number of aspects of the cost of the project were examined by the Committee at a private briefing held prior to public hearing, including lease arrangements in respect of the proposed site. The Committee was advised that DHA had entered into a binding lease agreement with the ACT in respect of the proposed site. The Committee expresses its concern that this action was undertaken prior to Parliamentary approval for the proposed development.
- 1.13 The Committee has observed with a number of projects that arrangements have been made by the sponsoring agency for the purchase of land integral to the project and that the Committee was not advised of the purchase and purchase arrangements prior to referral of the project to the Committee by the Parliament.

Recommendation 1

- 1.14 **The Committee recommends that agencies notify the Committee, at the earliest opportunity, of purchases, or commitments for purchases, of land intended for a development which may be referred to the Committee prior to referral of the development to the Committee by the Parliament.**

Timing

- 1.15 DHA proposes that, subject to parliamentary approval, dwellings on the development will be available for occupation by the end of June 2001, to accord with the mid-year Defence posting cycle.¹¹

⁷ DHA Submission, 4 July 2000, p. 7.

⁸ DHA Submission, 4 July 2000, pp. 8-9.

⁹ DHA Submission, 4 July 2000, p. 10.

¹⁰ DHA Submission, 4 July 2000, p. 10.

¹¹ DHA Submission, 4 July 2000, p. 10.

The Defence Housing Authority

- 1.16 DHA was established in 1987 by the *Defence Housing Authority Act 1987* as a separate legal entity responsible for the administration of the housing requirements of Australia's Defence personnel. Operations commenced in January 1988.
- 1.17 DHA's function is to manage the houses that have been provided to the Department of Defence for the use of service families and the rental assistance program. DHA acquires additional houses through a combination of:
- construction;
 - spot purchase, that is, direct purchase from the market;
 - lease; and
 - 'sale-and-lease back' arrangements.
- 1.18 DHA disposes of old and/or poor quality houses by sale.

Weston Creek, ACT

- 1.19 Weston Creek is a residential area of Canberra, ACT. It is on the western edge of Canberra and is a geographically distinct group of eight suburbs with a population (1996) of 24, 000. There are approximately 8,560 houses/townhouses in Weston Creek. The suburbs are Weston, Holder, Duffy, Rivett, Chapman, Stirling, Fisher and Waramanga.
- 1.20 Primary Schools are located in Weston, Holder, Duffy, Rivett, Chapman and Waramanga. A single campus high school (years 7-10) is in Waramanga which serves the district and attracts out of district students for specialist courses. The Weston Campus of The Canberra College (years 11 & 12) is located in Stirling.
- 1.21 Weston Creek also has retirement villages in Stirling, Fisher and Weston. A day respite centre for the elderly is located in Rivett.

Announcement of proposed development

1.22 In a *Media Release* of 10 December 1999 the Minister for Veterans' Affairs and Minister Assisting the Minister for Defence, the Hon. Bruce Scott MP, announced the proposed development. The *Media Release* stated:

As a first step, in association with the proposed new Staff Course at Weston Creek, the ACT planned to enter into a direct arrangement with the authority for the development of the so-called Stirling Estate, with a view to completing it by the end of 2000.

"This will provide capacity for 50 new homes in the Weston Creek area. The development will of course, be subject to normal planning approval processes and consultation with the community", Mrs Carnell said.¹²

12 Media Release - The Hon Bruce Scott MP - Minister for Veterans' Affairs - Minister Assisting the Minister for Defence, *\$200m Boost for Canberra from Defence Housing Expansion*, 10, December 1999.

The need for the work

DHA rationale

- 2.1 The principal drivers articulated by DHA for the need for the proposed development can be summarised as follows:
- a DHA residential development will partially meet overall Defence needs for additional DHA managed dwellings in Canberra; and
 - the imminent expansion of the Australian Defence College (ADC) syllabi and Defence intention to collocate its three single Service Command and Staff Colleges at the ADC.¹

Alternatives

- 2.2 DHA examined three options, of which the construction of the proposed development was the preferred option. The three options were:
- direct lease from the private rental market;
 - direct purchase from the private property market; and
 - construction of properties.²

1 Transcript of evidence, pp. 1 & 2.

2 Transcript of evidence, pp. 2-3.

- 2.3 With regard to the direct purchasing and lease from the private property market, DHA advised the Committee in its submission that:
- properties are particularly scarce in Weston Creek and proximate suburbs; and
 - the rental market in Canberra is very tight with a vacancy rate of less than 2 per cent.
- 2.4 DHA considered that the above two factors severely limited both the direct purchasing and direct leasing opportunities in the ACT and made the constructed housing option the most effective.³

Consideration by the Committee

- 2.5 A number of aspects of the need for the proposed development were raised by the Committee with DHA at the public hearing. These were:
- alternative sites;
 - the mix of dwellings;
 - direct purchase from private property market; and
 - defence force housing requirement.

Alternative sites

- 2.6 The Committee questioned DHA if there were any alternative sites it was able to consider and why the Stirling site was the favoured one. DHA advised that the proposed site was identified as a result of a DHA and ACT government joint task force. DHA also advised that the proposed site had been zoned for residential development in 1993 and met the requirements that DHA was looking to achieve in putting together a development in the Weston Creek area.⁴

The mix of dwellings

- 2.7 The Committee questioned DHA as to the rationale for the mix of dwelling types on the proposed site. DHA advised that it tries to take into
-

3 Transcript of evidence, p. 2.

4 Transcript of evidence, p. 32.

account the needs of different families and to design houses that meet changing family needs, and having done that the layout becomes an issue of what looks best on the site and makes best use of the land.⁵

- 2.8 The Committee also questioned DHA as to why it did not opt for a more intensive development. DHA advised that it was its desire to build in sympathy with the surrounding area. The proposed dwelling mix was chosen having regard to commercial factors and ADF need.⁶

Direct purchase from private property market

- 2.9 The Committee examined DHA's rationale for not opting for the direct purchase of properties from the private property market as an alternative to the proposed development. DHA advised the Committee that within Canberra it relies very extensively on the private market and that it has 400 people receiving a rental allowance.⁷ DHA also advised that it was conducting a campaign to expand the range of leasing arrangements, but where possible, and given that DHA is only meeting three-quarters of the total ACT demand, it is keen to do a development of the proposed type.⁸

Defence force housing requirement

- 2.10 DHA's submission to the Committee advised that Canberra is home to approximately 1800 Defence families and that the housing requirement will vary around this figure for the next several years (representing a net increase of approximately 50 houses by 2001).⁹ DHA also advised that DHA managed housing stock in Canberra is approximately 1300, the remainder either live in their own houses or are serviced through shorter term private sector housing leases subsidised by payment of rental allowance.¹⁰ DHA housing program for the Canberra area aims to provide for:

- a net increase in projected demand (50 houses);

5 Transcript of evidence, pp. 32.

6 Transcript of evidence, pp. 32-33.

7 Transcript of evidence, p. 35.

8 Transcript of evidence, p. 35.

9 DHA submission, 4 July 2000, p. 1.

10 DHA submission, 4 July 2000, p.1.

- stock turnover estimated at approximately 90-100 houses per annum; and
- an increase in the proportion of DHA managed stock.¹¹

- 2.11 Evidence submitted to the Committee indicated that over the next four years DHA will build 900 new homes at a cost of \$200 million.¹² The Committee questioned DHA about the apparent contradiction between that figure and evidence indicating growth over the next four years of 105 new homes.¹³ DHA advised that the 900 new houses related to an assessment of meeting the defence housing total demand based on the premise that DHA would move to manage approximately 85 per cent of the total demand.¹⁴ DHA also advised that the 900 new homes was a reference to total demand and that from DHA's point of view it builds when it has to and when it gets opportunities, and it focuses on the availability of land.¹⁵
- 2.12 The Committee is firmly of the view that ADF personnel and their families should be provided with good quality, reliable and cost effective accommodation where there is a demonstrated need for such accommodation. While the Committee accepts that there is a need for additional defence housing in the ACT, the Committee's task in determining accurately and unequivocally the need for the project has been made difficult by evidence provided to the Committee by DHA in its submission, at the public hearing and on notice.
- 2.13 In some instances the evidence presented to the Committee has been in contradictory, particularly in relation to the Canberra housing requirement for ADF personnel. For example, total DHA managed housing stock figures provided at the public hearing were not the same as those provided subsequently to the Committee. DHA also had difficulties providing an unequivocal rationale in regard to evidence stating that DHA would building 900 new homes over the next four years. The Committee concludes DHA's calculation of the Defence Force housing requirement for this project has not been satisfactory.

11 DHA submission, 4 July 2000, p. 1.

12 DHA submission, 4 July 2000, 15.

13 Transcript of evidence, p. 37.

14 Transcript of evidence, p. 37.

15 Transcript of evidence, p. 38.

Recommendation 2

- 2.14** The Committee recommends that in respect to future DHA projects referred to the Committee, submissions contain detailed defence housing requirement data and a detailed methodological explanation for the data.

Survey of customer requirements

- 2.15 At the public hearing the Committee questioned DHA whether it had surveyed its customers so as to understand their preferences and needs. Defence advised that it had not surveyed specific families.¹⁶
- 2.16 The Committee strongly endorses the use of surveys as a means of establishing client preferences and needs.

Recommendation 3

- 2.17** The Committee recommends that DHA and/or the Department of Defence conduct ongoing surveys of Defence personnel to ascertain accommodation preferences and needs.

Recommendation 4

- 2.18** The Committee recommends that in respect to future DHA projects referred to the Committee, submissions contain details of accommodation preference surveys and the methodology relating to the particular survey.

Australian Defence College (ADC)

- 2.19 In its submission to the Committee DHA advised that the small net increase in Defence demand for housing in the ACT was partially attributable to the decision to collocate the three Single Service Command and Staff Colleges with the Joint Services Staff College at the ADC at Weston Creek.¹⁷ DHA also advised that the proposed development would

¹⁶ Transcript of evidence, p. 45.

¹⁷ DHA submission, 4 July 2000, p. 1.

be used to house a mixture of ADC staff, students and regular Defence personnel and their families.¹⁸

2.20 The Committee noted the following evidence from its Inquiry into the Defence Staff Colleges Collocation Project, Weston Creek, ACT:

Senator Murphy—I suppose this is really a question for Defence Housing, but I am curious as to how they are going to manage that. Will they have properties that will be vacant and then just move people in and out?

Brigadier Kelly—The current real estate situation in Canberra is such that, if the DHA cannot accommodate the numbers required, the commercial market can.

Senator Murphy—I understand that. I am just trying to understand the situation in terms of Defence housing and whether you would be better off just taking it out of the private market.

Brigadier Kelly—The DHA would do a business study on any of these initiatives that we have, and they would make a decision as to whether they should or should not build additional houses.

Senator Murphy—Have you been speaking to them? Has there been any communications with them with respect to this proposal?

Colonel White—I think they would be aware of the context of the proposal, but I suspect mainly out of the Queenscliff shift rather than a shift into Canberra. The personnel organisation is certainly aware of the proposal. They will be dealing with the housing authority, but they may not have spoken to them at this stage.¹⁹

2.21 At the public hearing into the proposed Stirling Development the Committee asked DHA whether the Department of Defence had advised DHA about the ADC in 1999 and whether it was possible for the Committee to be apprised of what the advice was.²⁰ DHA subsequently advised the Committee that there were a number of discussions between Defence and DHA relating to housing ADC students, commencing in June 1999, and provided related documentation.

2.22 It is the Committee's view that DHA's response and accompanying documentation indicates that the Department of Defence was aware that

18 DHA submission, 4 July 2000, p. 2.

19 Joint Committee on Public Works, *Official Committee Hansard*, Defence Staff College, Weston Creek, 11 June 1999, p. 53. See also pp. 19 and 43.

20 Transcript of evidence, p. 34.

there would be a need for accommodation in the ACT for students and staff who would be posted to the ADC and that DHA was not appraised of the need until late June 1999.

- 2.23 The Committee is also of the view that it would have been most helpful in its deliberations if DHA had provided the Committee with a copy of the business study²¹ as to whether DHA should or should not build additional houses.

Recommendation 5

- 2.24 The Committee recommends that the Department of Defence make DHA a party, at the earliest opportunity, to all discussions which may impact on ADF personnel housing requirements.**

21 Joint Committee on Public Works, *Official Committee Hansard*, Defence Staff College, Weston Creek, 11 June 1999, p. 53.

Engineering and environmental issues

Engineering

- 3.1 Evidence to the Committee indicated that a geotechnical investigation of the proposed site confirmed that it contains a significant amount of fill dumped from building activity in the 1970s and 1980s when the site served as a disposal site for builders waste and hard rock excavation spoil.¹ DHA advised that that fill was uncontrolled, and minimal compaction had occurred at the time of placement.²
- 3.2 DHA advised the Committee that it would remediate by removing the uncontrolled fill and replacing it with clean fill. Significantly, the ACT Government would meet the cost of the remediation.³
- 3.3 At the public hearing DHA was questioned by the Committee as to an apparent inconsistency in its statement of evidence. The inconsistency was between paragraph 7.4 and the executive summary of DHA's submission, which stated:

... the fill, from a contamination point of view, is suitable for use on residential developments.⁴

The proposed site is technically suitable subject to removal and replacement of previously uncontrolled fill.⁵

1 DHA submission, 4 July 2000, p. 7.

2 DHA submission, 4 July 2000, p. 7.

3 DHA submission, 4 July 2000, p. 7.

4 DHA submission, 4 July 2000, p. 7.

- 3.4 DHA advised the Committee that there was no contamination on the proposed site and that when referring to "contamination", DHA was saying that the site had not been the site of a sheep dip, a munitions factory or something of that nature.⁶ Further, DHA advised that, while the land was suitable building from an environmental point of view, from a construction management point of view, the soil could be said to be unstable.⁷

Cost of remediation

- 3.5 Evidence presented by DHA to the Committee subsequent to the public hearing confirmed that the cost of the remediation would be met by the ACT Government. In particular, DHA and the ACT Department of Treasury and Infrastructure had formally agreed that the estimated costs associated with remediation would be deducted from the site value.

Environmental issues

- 3.6 Evidence was submitted to the Committee that there were not any major environmental impacts associated with the proposed development.⁸ DHA advised the Committee that Environment ACT - Department of Urban Services had carried out a vegetation assessment of Section 24, including Block 87, and determined that the area between Teesdale Place and Fremantle Drive contains several mature Eucalypts that provide habitat and nest sites for wildlife, but is outside the boundary of the proposed development site.⁹
- 3.7 The Committee's inspection of the proposed site found that the site contained numerous mature and semi-mature native trees. DHA advised the Committee that it planned to retain as many trees as is practicable and to respect the presence of existing fauna.¹⁰

5 DHA submission, 4 July 2000, p. I.

6 Transcript of evidence, p. 42.

7 Transcript of evidence, p. 42.

8 Environment Australia submission, 2 August 2000.

9 DHA submission, 4 July 2000, p. 4.

10 DHA submission, 4 July 2000, p. 4.

- 3.8 The Committee concluded that the proposed site contained numerous mature and semi-mature native trees and that the proposed development would result in the removal of many of those trees.

Recommendation 6

- 3.9 **The Committee recommends that DHA take all reasonable steps to ensure that as many existing trees as is practical are preserved.**

Consultation

Introduction

4.1 DHA advised the Committee that it had consulted with various authorities, organisations and governmental departments in relation to the proposed development. They included:

- the ACT Department of Treasury and Infrastructure;
- the ACT Department of Urban Services;
- the ACTEW Corporation;
- the Chief Minister's Department;
- the Environment ACT;
- the Minister assisting the Minister for Defence;
- the National Consultative Group of Services Families;
- the Property Council of Australia (ACT Division); and
- the Weston Creek Community Council.¹

¹ DHA submission, 4 July 2000, p. 5.

Community consultation

- 4.2 DHA advised the Committee that it had met with community leaders and local residents on several occasions and that issues raised were primarily concerned with increased vehicular traffic and the need for traffic arrangements on Streeton Drive with or without the proposed development.²
- 4.3 Despite the efforts of DHA to advertise its intentions with regard to the proposed development through community meetings and advertising, the Committee received evidence challenging the sincerity and adequacy of the consultation processes engaged in by DHA.
- 4.4 One of the criticisms received by the Committee was that DHA had said it would retain 100 per cent ownership of the land³ and yet DHA's submission to the Committee stated that DHA intended to market 50 per cent of the development.⁴
- 4.5 When questioned at the public hearing about this apparent inconsistency, DHA advised the Committee that:
- The ownership is an issue that I do not believe the authority discussed because it is tied up very much with the financing of the property. The general approach that the authority likes to adopt is to use the sale and lease-back program because it has been found to be a very effective way of financing housing in the community and it is widely used right throughout the whole of Australia very successfully.⁵
- 4.6 Another criticism regarding the voracity of DHA's consultation process raised at the public hearing was the construction timetable. Evidence received by the Committee indicated that DHA had advised a community consultative meeting of 2 February 2000 that DHA proposed to start construction in mid June and for it to be completed by the beginning of December 2000 to accommodate the placement of families by January 2001.⁶
- 4.7 At the public hearing the Committee questioned DHA as to how it could provide such advice when its submission to Committee stated that DHA

2 DHA submission, 4 July 2000, p. 11.

3 Transcript of evidence, pp. 64-66

4 DHA submission, 4 July 2000, p.9.

5 Transcript of evidence, p. 40.

6 Transcript of evidence, p. 40.

would like to have the development on-line and available by end June 2001 to accord with the mid-year Defence posting cycle.⁷ Defence advised the Committee that:

That [December 2000 commencement] was the preferred time frame in which we would like to have achieved the completion of the project in order to support the Defence College, so that that houses were available in order for families to move in prior to the commencement of the course.⁸

- 4.8 The Committee concluded that it would have been preferable had DHA's community consultation process been more transparent, particularly with regard to ownership and construction commencement timetables.

Recommendation 7

- 4.9 The Committee recommends that DHA hold community meetings prior to the projects completion to facilitate project implementation and minimise community disturbance.**

7 DHA submission, 4 July 200, p. 10.

8 Transcript of evidence p. 40.

Traffic issues

General

- 5.1 The Committee received several submissions arguing that the proposed development would cause considerable traffic problems for residents who either have driveways on Streeton Drive, or who live in the area and regularly commute to work.
- 5.2 In its submission, DHA advised that it had addressed traffic issues in conjunction with the ACT Department of Urban Services and that a traffic plan for the proposed development included speed humps on Streeton Drive, a right turn land median treatment, pedestrian refuges at the intersection to the proposed development, and five new driveways giving direct access to Streeton Drive.¹

New proposal

- 5.3 At the public hearing, DHA advised the Committee that an alternate traffic calming proposal had been developed. DHA provided the Committee with a traffic control devices concept plan roundabouts option (the concept plan) which replaced the proposed traffic calming devices with two roundabouts at the main intersections between Streeton Drive and Darwinia Terrace and Streeton Drive and Bangalay Crescent (A

¹ Transcript of evidence, p. 39.

conceptual plan is provided at Appendix D).² DHA also advised that it was now its intention to discuss the concept plan in a more formal way with the relevant planning authority and with a meeting of the community group.³

- 5.4 DHA advised the Committee that the concept plan did not have to be referred back to the development approval process and that the development approval was independent of that but requires that to take place.⁴ The Committee questioned DHA as to the risk of failure to obtain approval for the proposed concept plan posed for DHA. DHA advised that the risk to DHA would be that the required planning approval from the ACT Department of Urban Services was not forthcoming, but believed the risk to be low.⁵
- 5.5 The Committee also asked DHA whether there was any financial risk for DHA in respect of the concept plan. DHA advised that the cost of doing the work was the responsibility of the ACT Government and that that cost would be subtracted from the price which DHA paid the ACT government for the lease.⁶

Community support

- 5.6 Witnesses at the public hearing either indicated support for the proposed traffic control devices concept plan roundabouts option,⁷ or that it would be an improvement on what was previously recommended.⁸
- 5.7 The Committee acknowledges the concern of witnesses at the public hearing and, in respect of the community in general, that adequate opportunity to examine the proposed traffic control devices concept plan roundabouts option had not occurred.⁹ The Committee notes DHA's undertaking in evidence to discuss the concept plan in a meeting with the community.

2 Transcript of evidence, p. 39.

3 Transcript of evidence, p. 39.

4 Transcript of evidence, p. 39.

5 Transcript of evidence, p. 39.

6 Transcript of evidence, p. 39.

7 Transcript of evidence, pp. 3 & 79.

8 Transcript of evidence, p. 84.

9 Transcript of evidence, p. 87.

Community views

- 6.1 Aside from traffic calming issues, the general tenor of the Weston Creek community is supportive of the proposed development. ACT Assembly members, local traders and peak community bodies believe that the proposed development will provide a welcome and appropriate stimulus to Weston Creek.¹ Proponents of the development also believe that the Weston Creek district has all of the necessary infrastructure to support the families which may live in the proposed development.²
- 6.2 The Committee received a number of submissions opposing the proposed development. The major elements of the case put by those opposing the proposed development can be summarised as follows: the proposed development will cause unsafe traffic conditions; the proposed construction of 50 dwellings will result in a very high density development which is not consistent with the surrounding neighbourhood; the proposed development will add considerably to traffic noise for Streeton Drive residents; and the development will devalue properties in the area.³
- 6.3 The Committee notes the objections to the proposed development, but is satisfied that the proposed development should proceed.

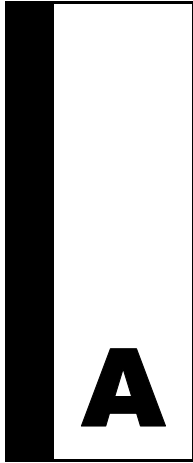
1 Transcript of evidence, pp. 2 & 3.

2 Transcript of evidence, p. 58.

3 Transcript of evidence, p. 93.

Recommendation 8

The Committee recommends that the proposed construction of mixed residential dwellings at Block 87, Section 24, Stirling, ACT, proceed at an estimated cost of \$11.5 million.



Appendix A—Witnesses

Anderson, Mr Peter

Appleton, Colonel Paul, Project Director-Australian Command and Staff College,
Department of Defence

Bear, Mr Richard, General Manager-Development & Sales, Defence Housing
Authority

Beauchamp, Mr Anton, Manger-Canberra Housing Management Centre, Defence
Housing Authority

Carl, Mr Jeffrey, Chairperson, Weston Creek Community Council

Corbell, Mr Simon, Member ACT Legislative Assembly

Gustavsen, Mr Philip, Project Officer, Defence Housing Authority

Holmes, Ms Michelle

Lyon, Mr Keith, Managing Director, Defence Housing Authority

Quinlan, Mr Ted, Member ACT Legislative Assembly

Sutherland, Mr Robert, Deputy Chairperson, Weston Creek Community Council



Appendix B—List of Submissions

ACROD Limited (ACT Division)

Peter Anderson

Australian Heritage Commission

BW & DB Davis

Defence Housing Authority

Kate Carnell MLA

Simon Corbell MLA

Environment Australia

Michelle Holmes

Garry Humphries MLA

Mrs C Hunter

Phil Jones

Ted Quinlan MLA

Senator the Hon Margaret Reid

John Skurr

Weston Creek Community Council