

COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

Official Committee Hansard

JOINT COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS

Reference: Provision of facilities for Project Single LEAP - Phase ${\bf 1}$

FRIDAY, 11 AUGUST 2006

SYDNEY

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JOINT STATUTORY COMMITTEE ON

PUBLIC WORKS

Friday, 11 August 2006

Members: Mrs Moylan (*Chair*), Mr Brendan O'Connor (*Deputy Chair*), Senators Forshaw, Parry and Troeth and Mr Forrest, Mr Jenkins, Mr Ripoll and Mr Wakelin

Members in attendance: Senators Forshaw, Parry and Troeth and Mr Jenkins, Mrs Moylan, Mr Brendan O'Connor and Mr Wakelin

Terms of reference for the inquiry:

To inquire into and report on:

Provision of facilities for Project Single LEAP - Phase 1

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Committee met at 11.41 am

CHAIR (Mrs Moylan)—I declare open the public hearing into the provision of facilities for Project Single LEAP phase 1 at Gallipoli Barracks, Enoggera and RAAF Base Amberley in Queensland and Holsworthy Barracks in New South Wales. I welcome you all to this hearing today. I have an apology from Mrs Vale, the federal member for Hughes. I would like to put on the public record that during the confidential cost briefings it was apparent that there were more questions than we had allocated time for, so we will hold a separate confidential cost briefing to further explore some of those areas. I, therefore, ask for the cooperation of committee members in sticking to those matters that can be raised in this public hearing.

This project was referred to the Joint Committee on Public Works on 29 March 2006 for consideration and report to parliament. In accordance with subsection 17(3) of the Public Works Committee Act 1969:

- (3) In considering and reporting on a public work, the Committee shall have regard to -
 - (a) the stated purpose of the work and its suitability for that purpose;
 - (b) the necessity for, or the advisability of, carrying out the work;
 - (c) the most effective use that can be made, in the carrying out of the work, of the moneys to be expended on the work;
 - (d) where the work purports to be of a revenue-producing character, the amount of revenue that it may reasonably be expected to produce; and
 - (e) the present and prospective public value of the work.

[11.43 am]

BROOKE, Mr Graham, Partner, KPMG; Financial Adviser, Department of Defence

KILGOUR, Air Commodore Andrew Edward, Director-General, Strategic Infrastructure Projects, Infrastructure Division, Department of Defence

LAMBRIANIDIS, Mr James, Development Consultant, Sinclair Knight Merz; Technical Adviser, Department of Defence

PEPPER, Ms (Maureen) Barbara, Director, Project Single Living Environment Accommodation Precinct, Infrastructure Division, Department of Defence

WATSON, Mr Peter John, Regional Manager, Corporate Services Infrastructure Sydney West South

Witnesses were then sworn or affirmed—

CHAIR—Welcome, and thank you for meeting with the committee today. The committee has received a statement of evidence and a supplementary submission from the Department of Defence. These submissions will be made available in a volume of submissions to the inquiry and they are also available on the committee's web site. Does the Department of Defence wish to propose amendments to any of the submissions made thus far?

Air Cdre Kilgour—I note that in our letter dated 20 July I provided some amendments to our formal statement of evidence. In summary, there was a minor amendment to the last sentence in paragraph 9 on page 5, and there was a new paragraph following that, now numbered paragraph 10. The original paragraph 10 was amended and renumbered as paragraph 10A. I can read through those if the committee wishes.

CHAIR—The committee received your advice by letter and considered that in the meeting on Thursday morning.

Air Cdre Kilgour—Further to those, I have two further changes to the statement of evidence, which I will read through. I would ask the committee to insert a paragraph 45A, which reads as follows:

A cost-benefit analysis was undertaken to compare the costs of refurbishment of existing LIA at Enoggera against new construction of the additional required units. The analysis concluded that refurbishment would cost approximately seven per cent more in construction costs alone than in a new build solution, would not fully meet the functionality and specifications attributed to defence level 5 standards and, due to the footprint of the site, would fall 76 units short of the required 500 units under phase 1 Single LEAP at that site. It was further assessed that the whole-of-life building maintenance and life cycle cost for the refurbished facilities would be higher than the new build option by some 15 per cent over the life of the contract. Due to the risk this option afforded the private sector in assuming repair and maintenance of aged facilities over the life of the 30-year contract, this option was not further pursued for both economic and qualitative reasons.

I would also ask to insert at the end of paragraph 29 the following text:

Scope exists within the proposed contractual arrangements to be able to modify the contract under competitive tendering arrangements in the event that the Commonwealth seeks to modify the accommodation service after commercial acceptance. This could enable defence to contest the delivery of future additional living-in accommodation requirements arising out of other defence projects against the phase 1 Single LEAP provider. For example, there may be a future requirement to provide additional living-in accommodation at Holsworthy for ADF personnel displaced as a result of the potential Sydney intermodal freight hub announced in September 2004 by the minister.

I would also ask the committee to note that we have subsequently engaged the Jagara people at Amberley and we are in the process of engaging the Tharawal people here at Holsworthy.

CHAIR—Going back to your letter of 20 July, the secretary tells me that we do need to have that read into the transcript. Could you do that for *Hansard*.

Air Cdre Kilgour—The amendment to paragraph 9 is to amend the last sentence of the paragraph. It should now read, 'Original approved phasings were:' with the table as it is represented in the statement of evidence. The new paragraph 10 would read as follows:

The original Single LEAP budget was based on a capital-only cost basis annuity repayment model. Following a revision to the implementation strategy, Single LEAP will deliver an accommodation service inclusive of facilities upgrades, furniture and fittings, specified maintenance and operation over a 30-year period. As part of the 6,400-room remit, Single LEAP has already funded 60 LIA level 5 rooms at Robertson Barracks and Kokoda Barracks. Phase 1 will deliver 12,095 LIA level 5 rooms under a potential public-private partnership arrangement, with the accommodation planned for occupation between May 2008 and March 2009. Single LEAP intends to deliver the balance of the commitment—about 5,100 LIA level 5 rooms—through a second PPP arrangement as part of phase 2. Planning for this phase has commenced, with an EOI expected to be released later in 2006.

The original paragraph 10 is amended and now numbered as paragraph 10A and would read as follows:

It should be noted that the requirement for up to 6,400 bed spaces to be delivered under Single LEAP will only partially address the full LIA liability identified in the 2003 Defence LIA review. Separate defence initiatives have been implemented to address the balance of the LIA deficiencies, including a combination of facilities upgrades and major redevelopment projects.

CHAIR—I now invite you to make a short statement to the committee and then we will proceed to questions.

Air Cdre Kilgour—I have nothing additional to say to my opening statement at the previous hearing.

Mr WAKELIN—In terms of the general context of the discussion, it might be useful for the committee—it would certainly be useful for me—to understand there was an assessment of a total of over 36,000 living-in accommodation that were generally in a poor state. In 2003, defence conducted a review of living-in accommodation for ADF members without dependants. The review found a shortfall of 26,000 rooms at the appropriate standard. Subsequently, the government has responded with 6,400 rooms, with the costings the purpose of the discussion.

There are about three streams to this just to try to get the context. Being in Darwin, and mindful of what I saw there last week as part of the Defence Subcommittee, there is a great mobility with defence. Therefore, do we have an understanding of the general usage over a 12-month period regarding occupancy rates? That is, you probably need to have a number of facilities that only have usage on a limited basis. Could we get a picture of how that actually works?

Air Cdre Kilgour—I will attempt to answer this in a general sense. The total defence LIA stock is broken up between that accommodation which is in operational use and that which is in operational surge. It is essentially dormitory style accommodation—multiple beds in the one room with shared ablutions facilities and shared laundry facilities. They are typically used for exercises—primarily the mounting of operations. We have another category, which is categorised as level 3 in your pack. It is essentially for training courses which are of less than six-months duration. There are some other candidates who would use the rooms. These are normally single occupancy rooms which have shared ablutions. Then you have what this project is required to deliver, which is level 5. The committee has seen this morning some of the pictorials in design terms for those. Typically though they are single occupancy rooms with an ensuite with shared balcony. They include car accommodation and personal storage.

Mr WAKELIN—Therefore, can we presume that the level 5 pretty much have 100 per cent occupancy over a 12-month period in any given year?

Air Cdre Kilgour—In practical terms, defence would be aiming for 100 per cent, but that depends on the nature of the personnel who go into them. For example, the Army personnel are generally from formed operational units. By the nature of their activities they are away for a percentage of the year. So the rooms will be allocated. Defence will pay for the use of those. There are some scale-backs in terms of levels of service when they are away on exercise. In a practical sense, you would probably get somewhere in the order of 85 per cent occupancy.

Mr WAKELIN—Going back to the level 2s and level 3s, they are just less used—

Air Cdre Kilgour—They are generally filled by people who are on shorter term training courses. Their occupancy is driven by the schedule of training. Depending on the base, you could probably expect to get a similar level of occupancy across a year—maybe a bit less. The operational surge accommodation is the one in which you would see greatest fluctuation in its use, and it is really driven by the exercise schedule, because that is the most predictable use of those facilities.

Mr WAKELIN—Bases like the three we are talking about would not experience that same kind of surge, would they?

Air Cdre Kilgour—There is some operational surge at Amberley, there would be some operational surge at Enoggera and there certainly would be some operational surge here at Holsworthy because of the nature of the units that occupy them most.

Mr WAKELIN—This is quite a complex area. I have some questions regarding the specific needs of single accommodation. In a Defence Force catering for men and women, can we comment about the different needs of single accommodation and on-base type issues? For example, there is a tendency within the Defence Housing Authority to have accommodation

spread right through the suburbs, but can we talk about the specific and operational needs of single accommodation on-base?

Air Cdre Kilgour—Are you referring to that generally across defence bases?

Mr WAKELIN—Yes, that is where I would like to go, and then we can apply it to the three areas, if you see fit.

Air Cdre Kilgour—Just so I understand the question, are you making the split between gender?

Mr WAKELIN—Yes, I think it is involved. Once again, I was in Darwin last week and I am very aware that the patrol boats now cater for men and women working on them.

Air Cdre Kilgour—The facilities we are building here under Single LEAP are single occupancy facilities, so there would be nothing to stop you from having mixed gender in the same building. I think that, from a unit command perspective, they would probably try and break them up, for obvious reasons. But certainly the facilities themselves would support whatever model unit command wished to try and apply with the base management.

Mr WAKELIN—Do you have an understanding of what percentage of the Defence Force the Defence Housing Authority may accommodate?

Air Cdre Kilgour—No, I do not in specific terms.

Mr WAKELIN—Therefore, the demarcation between the Defence Housing Authority and your operational requirements is readily clear.

Air Cdre Kilgour—Sorry, I can comment on that. We are delivering accommodation to those personnel who, by defence policy, must live in. They do not have a choice to go into rental allowance. They are required as a service requirement to live in service supplied accommodation in a controlled environment. The balance of the population that you are referring to have a choice under that policy and, as such, can be accommodated through rental assistance arrangements.

Mr WAKELIN—Can you just define 'controlled environment'. What does that entail?

Air Cdre Kilgour—The services have generally specified that as being on-base. There are some examples, which the committee will possibly see in the future, of us providing a controlled environment off-base, but certainly all of the ones before the committee this round are on-base solutions within a base precinct with all of the command controls in place that would normally exist. They are certainly quite different to what you would see in a rental assistance environment.

Mr WAKELIN—I have a slight concern about the proposal that is in front of us, given the 30-year time frame and given that no-one can predict what those needs might be or how our culture might change, as it is already—I think we are acknowledging—changing for defence within our population, and how that might affect recruitment within defence. I know that this might upset all of the wonderful planning that has been done, but what consideration was given

in the overall strategy in a place like Holsworthy to where this accommodation—which we all accept is a very valued asset and much more in line with the private sector—was sited, given that in 26 years time there might no longer be a need for that facility and it could be available for disposal to the private sector in a more economic way if it had been placed other than where it is?

Air Cdre Kilgour—I think in simple terms that the sites which we have selected for phase 1—and we are in the process of going through a similar activity for phase 2—were selected on the basis of the long-term capability requirements. So the three bases selected for phase 1 have longevity as far out as Defence can predict. The project certainly looked at opportunities for on-and off-base solutions to the controlled environment. In the case of the ones before the committee, the decision was taken on the advice of the three service chiefs that, for those sites, on-base solutions best met their long-term capability requirements. We have attempted to identify sites that meet the capability managers needs, rather than trying to dictate to them an infrastructure solution. I do take your point in terms of people being able to predict what the living environment requirements might be in 30 years time. I think that, within the constraints of the policy environment we are in, we have attempted to do what we can.

Mr WAKELIN—I would like to report, as an aside to the committee, that on the *Armidale* patrol boat last week we met a female commander. It was quite a refreshing and interesting experience. She told us how females are now very much at the fore in our defence forces.

Mr BRENDAN O'CONNOR—I have a couple of questions following on from Mr Wakelin's comments about housing and accommodating our defence personnel. I have had the good fortune of speaking with the Defence Housing Authority and Defence over a number of years now. From those inquiries it has been put to me that the accommodation of defence personnel has inclined towards off-base accommodation—that is, defence personnel being interested in being accommodated off-base. Therefore we have been in a position to look at the way in which the Defence Housing Authority has gone about constructing dwellings in an area which usually is integrated into the community, even if there are discrete aspects to that construction.

You said that you cannot really anticipate with any precision what demands would be required in 30 years time, but really my general concern—if I were to have one about this particular project—would be that in 20 years time the trend towards off-base accommodation will grow at the expense of on-base accommodation and we will be left with white elephants in that we will still have bases which may not have been moved, bases which have not been sold to the private sector or which are to be used by the community at large, while at the same time there will have been that continuing trend to have people accommodated off-base. Can you just reflect upon those concerns that I might have?

Air Cdre Kilgour—I will try to do that without getting into the realm of what is really the responsibility of the minister. Effectively, what we have is a policy environment which says that certain categories of our single population, for largely operational reasons, are required to live in. Whether that changes over time, I do not think anybody can really predict; but it is likely not to change.

Mr BRENDAN O'CONNOR—Has it changed in the last 20 years? Has there been a trend in the last 20 years to move from on-base to off-base accommodation?

Air Cdre Kilgour—What we have seen is a categorisation of our personnel. When I joined the Air Force 30 years ago, we had a larger tendency for people to live in. Many of those were not required to live in a strict business rule sense; they chose to live in. The categories of accommodation that you are referring to are rental assistance properties for single members or improved married quarters. We have largely moved all our married quarters off our bases and put them into the community environment. We have categorised, in a policy sense, those personnel who have always chosen to live in. We have provided a better policy description for them. We now try to push them into the rental assistance market and deal with that in a different, more cost-effective way. What we are doing is concentrating on that proportion of the single population whom, for defence capability reasons, we want to live in.

Mr BRENDAN O'CONNOR—Is it the case though that we would be spending up to \$700 million predicated on the assumption that there will not be a policy change that would move people that are currently accommodated on-base to off-base? Isn't that a high risk—to anticipate that far out?

Air Cdre Kilgour—I do not think it is. If you look at the category of personnel now covered by the current policy, those personnel have always been required to live in. All we have done is document that policy more tightly. I suspect that the service chiefs would be making the argument to you that from a capability perspective those personnel will always be required to live in for the same reasons. I think the reasons are enduring. I do not believe I can answer it beyond that.

Mr JENKINS—For each of the three sites, what is the area of the site that has been set aside?

Mr Lambrianidis—It is roughly between six and eight hectares.

Mr JENKINS—At each site?

Mr Lambrianidis—At Holsworthy it is roughly between six and eight hectares. Enoggera is a fair bit tighter; it may be around five or six hectares. Amberley is about four or five hectares.

Air Cdre Kilgour—If the committee wants those in detail I can get the figures.

Mr JENKINS—Yes, take that on notice. What is the reasoning behind the size of the footprint of the buildings as against open space?

CHAIR—Do you want that taken on notice—the ratio of building to site?

Mr JENKINS—Yes, the total areas and the comparison between the direct building footprints and the open space.

Air Cdre Kilgour—We can provide that against the reference project. For obvious reasons, a selected design might vary from that slightly.

Mr JENKINS—In some of the documents I read something about trying to produce a village atmosphere. What does that mean? Is it the way the accommodation relates to itself or is it that there are other facilities that will be provided that give it that atmosphere?

Air Cdre Kilgour—Perhaps I can answer it this way: an example of what would not be a village atmosphere would be row on row of three-storey blocks, very close together with just pathways intervening. Indeed, that is how we used to build them 30 years ago. This project aims to provide some space around the facility, with light to enable trees within the facility. That is particularly important here at Holsworthy, as the committee would have noted during our drive around.

Mr JENKINS—Air Commodore, you have pre-empted a question—now I am flustered. Keep going.

Air Cdre Kilgour—Certainly, it is adding some common facilities into the complex, including some of those special amenities that we described to the committee at our previous hearing: common use facilities where the troops can engage in some recreation.

Mr JENKINS—For the common use facilities particular to Holsworthy—was I told the answer to this on the bus? If so, I apologise that I did not listen. I did not get a sense of it. The site was the site, as far as I was concerned. It seemed to be a bit of land that was there—it is a lovely piece of land, but how does it relate to the rest of the base?

Air Cdre Kilgour—Are you talking about other elements of the living-in precinct?

Mr JENKINS—The way the living-in precinct relates to different things. There was a swimming pool and some other facilities on the base that the single accommodated persons would be using.

Air Cdre Kilgour—I will answer in this way and then I might ask Mr Watson for a more detailed answer, should I leave anything out. Essentially, we have planned these sites at each of the bases on the principle of zone planning. In the case of Holsworthy, we have identified a living-in precinct zone, and part of that precinct includes the Single LEAP site. On the other side of the main road are the existing messes, for example. As we went around on the visit it was pointed out to you the site of the current Mackie Club, and that that was a future mess location, down track as part of a separate project. What we have done is work out, in zone planning terms, where the living-in precinct needs to be at the base. We have synergised with where existing facilities are and we have identified where future facilities will come to replace those which are quite tired and reaching the end of their lives. Mr Watson, do you want to add anything?

Mr JENKINS—I am happy with that answer, unless Mr Watson has something spectacular he wants to tell me. Regarding traffic, we saw the layout of the road system today. How much will that have to be altered because of the nature of the 500 LEAP units?

Air Cdre Kilgour—Within the site?

Mr JENKINS—Within and around the site, because that would be part of the project.

Mr Lambrianidis—The major existing roads will remain as is. There will be roads that will come off those existing roads. The way that the project has been developed with regard to the village atmosphere means there will be roads meandering through the site. They will only be

very short roads connecting to the accommodation. We do not expect that there will be significant changes to the existing road network.

Mr JENKINS—To what extent would the upgrading of the present roads, because of the new usage, be part of this project? To what extent would they be a liability against this project?

Mr Lambrianidis—You might have noted that 17 Construction and 21 Construction squadrons were in the vicinity, so the roads are capable of carrying the loads of those large vehicles. The motor vehicles would be secondary in terms of the capability of those roads. The infrastructure at this base is particularly an issue that will form part of a larger project with regard to infrastructure on the base.

Mr JENKINS—I want to get back to the trees. It is a terrific site. I take it that you will dictate some sort of mapping master plan.

Mr Lambrianidis—As part of our site survey planning, we have provided each of the consortium members with a feature survey identifying all of the trees. Our design was functional in terms of trying to accommodate the proposed dwellings or buildings amongst the trees.

Mr JENKINS—What is the interface between the private provider and the allocation of the accommodation? Will that operate at each site as per some system within the base?

Air Cdre Kilgour—There is an existing system that the base manager oversights, which this fits into.

CHAIR—Mr Jenkins has just raised a number of questions which were also raised by the Ipswich council. There are a number of issues that they have listed as concerns, such as noise, attenuation, the eco-friendly design. They thought there were some issues that may have an impact on the amenity of the created residential areas and that they should be assessed and addressed in detail. They also went to recreation space. As we did the site inspection this morning, you said that half of the oval would be taken up with building or part of the development. Can you explain how you plan to manage these issues that have been raised by the Ipswich council? I was addressing the deputy chairman; I was not sure whether Mr Jenkins asked about effluent disposal and water. They are two of the issues as well. They went to road networks, which Mr Jenkins raised, the management of stormwater, effluent and water supply as well as the other matters that I raised.

Air Cdre Kilgour—So I am clear about your question, does this relate specifically to the Amberley site?

CHAIR—I know you do not need any planning approvals by the shire, but Defence is always a good citizen, and in previous hearings there have always been good discussions between Defence and the local shire. Can you manage these problems to the satisfaction of Ipswich? If not, can you explain why?

Air Cdre Kilgour—I believe that we can. In my formal response to the Ipswich submission, I addressed how we propose to do that. In the case of Amberley, there are some unique issues which are not relevant across the other sites. They are to do with the state of the infrastructure,

but perhaps more so to do with the fact that you have got an operating airfield located approximate to the site, and there are specific aircraft noise issues which relate to that site that do not relate to the other two.

In progressing the actual detailed design, Defence will work with the strategic partner and our Defence planning authority to make sure that issues associated with services adjoining the site are adequately taken care of. We have already mandated in the output specification requirements about specific sites relating to noise. Another issue at places like Amberley is the reflection off roofs, as that does affect aircraft operations. Those sorts of issues will be taken care of in working with the strategic partner and our local planning authority representatives to ensure that in executing the detailed design, we do not transgress any of our normal business rules. Those business rules are not dissimilar to what the local councils have to contend with, and certainly there are some synergies in them. Our teams work reasonably closely with their local council contemporaries and, indeed, in some areas Defence probably has higher standards in place than exist outside Defence.

Senator FORSHAW—Have you had any discussions with the two local councils here—Liverpool and Sutherland—and, if so, have they raised any concerns or issues?

Ms Pepper—I briefed both the Liverpool City Council and the Sutherland Shire Council back in May, I think. They raised no issues. They welcomed the briefing and they raised no specific issues.

Senator FORSHAW—The other issue I wanted to ask about was: in the preliminary design, if I can call it that, of the units, has there been an opportunity for defence personnel to have an input into the sorts of things that they might be concerned about or interested in? I am sorry if you have covered this at the other hearings.

Air Cdre Kilgour—That is a very good question. I will start off the answer and hand off to Barbara to talk through some of the process that we went through in leading up to the output specification. We have a generic standard at which we are required to deliver level 5 accommodation and we have already covered that with the committee. That forms our baseline. I add that, as the accommodation is brought online and our soldiers, sailors and airmen occupy it, they will be required to pay what is effectively a rental charge for their use. We have an organisation within Defence that goes around and accredits those facilities to make sure that they are at the requisite standard. What we are building needs to not differ too much from the defined standard for that reason.

We have gone through a fairly detailed process with site visits whereby commanders, their troops and our regional and base defence staff have been engaged in informing the development of the output specification that we finally took to industry. I think that process in general was fairly rigorous, and certainly we and people like our previous parliamentary secretary were well informed. That fed into the process as well.

Ms Pepper—The standard that we are providing for in this project is based on what we have provided previously at Lavarack Barracks in Townsville and at Robertson Barracks in Darwin. There is a specific, functional amenity and various sizes per room, as you saw in the previous briefing. So we are basically using that as the model for this level 5 accommodation. As far as

the services that are associated with the provision of the accommodation go, that is based on the existing garrison support services contracts.

Mr Lambrianidis—To add to that: what you saw this morning is not set in concrete. It is the basis for our public reference project. Our process, when we get to construction, is to actually work with each of the regions and inform the design as it develops as part of a process to ensure that they have some input into what is being produced at each of the bases.

Senator FORSHAW—I note you have also listed federal and state government representatives in the area. When I asked you about the discussions with the local councils I should have asked you: what about the state government departments themselves, particularly those associated with utilities? Do you have discussions with them?

Air Cdre Kilgour—Thanks for that question. I will give you an example. Here, at Holsworthy, we wrote to the state department of planning and offered a briefing that was not taken up. What we have attempted to do is make offers. Where we have been engaged, we have gone back with further detail. That is reflected in our consultation list.

Senator FORSHAW—I assumed that was the case; it is just that they were not listed in the submission.

CHAIR—I thank the witnesses who have appeared before the committee today for assisting us in our inspection this morning and at the private briefing. Thank you very much.

Resolved (on motion by Mr Brendan O'Connor, seconded by Senator Forshaw):

That, pursuant to the power conferred by section 2(2) of the Parliamentary Papers Act 1908, this committee authorises publication of the evidence given before it and submissions presented at public hearing this day.

Committee adjourned at 12.26 pm