

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### Background

1.1 The Senate referred the matter of the disposal of Defence properties to the Committee on 5 September 2000 for inquiry and report by the last sitting day of March 2001.<sup>1</sup> Subsequently, the Senate gave the Committee extensions of time to 27 September 2001 to present its final report to the Senate. The Committee initially addressed the first four terms of reference, which related to the disposal of the Artillery Barracks, Fremantle. It reported its findings and recommendations on the disposal of that property in an interim report, which was 'tabled' out of session on 3 January 2001.

1.2 Since then, the Committee has been considering the final three terms of reference, involving an examination of the broader issues concerning the disposal of Defence properties. In essence, the Committee has been assessing the performance of the Defence Estate Organisation (DEO) in disposing of Defence properties, mainly through case studies, to try to establish why some properties were disposed of successfully while others created considerable dissension within the local community. Where appropriate, the Committee has also drawn on evidence taken during the first part of the inquiry relating to the disposal of the Artillery Barracks, Fremantle.

1.3 The Committee wishes to emphasise that it has never been its intention to make specific recommendations about the disposal of particular properties. The information gained through submissions, site visits and public hearings has been used primarily to determine the processes used by DEO in the disposal of properties and to identify weaknesses and strengths in those processes. Analysis of this information has enabled the Committee to make recommendations aimed at improving DEO's processes in managing and disposing of surplus Defence properties.

1.4 The Committee notes that during the course of the inquiry, significant progress was made or turning points reached in the disposal of particular properties. The Committee has been following this progress with the help of interested parties.

### Conduct of the inquiry

1.5 The Committee advertised the inquiry in the national press on 12 September 2000 calling for written submissions to be lodged with the Committee on all aspects of the inquiry. Initially, most of the submissions received by the Committee focussed on the disposal of the Artillery Barracks, Fremantle. Towards the end of that first part of the inquiry, the Committee reassessed the information contained in the submissions

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1 On 28 March 2001, the Senate extended the reporting date to 24 May 2001

relating to the broader issues of disposal of Defence properties. As a result of that process, the Committee wrote to a number of organisations, which had not up to that time contributed to the inquiry, seeking their input. A number of these organisations, or their constituent bodies, subsequently made submissions to the Committee. A total of 82 written submissions was received during both parts of the inquiry. These are listed in Appendix 1.

1.6 The Committee visited a number of Defence properties at Annerley, Yeronga and Witton Barracks, Indooroopilly in Brisbane; at North Penrith, Werrington, Dunheved, Ermington, Crows Nest, Randwick, Georges Heights and Middle Harbour in Sydney; and at Point Cook in Melbourne. In 2000, the Committee visited the Artillery Barracks, Fremantle and Hobbs Hall, Irwin Barracks, Karrakatta in Perth. The site visits familiarised the Committee with those properties, making evidence given in respect of them more pertinent.

1.7 The Committee conducted public hearings in Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne and Canberra. Details of those hearings are contained in Appendix 2.

### **Access to information**

1.8 Both of the Committee's reports and written submissions made to the Committee have been placed on the Committee's Internet web site [[www.aph.gov.au/senate\\_fadt](http://www.aph.gov.au/senate_fadt)].

1.9 The Hansard transcripts of evidence taken at public hearings have been placed on the Hansard web site [[www.aph.gov.au/hansard/](http://www.aph.gov.au/hansard/)]. There is also a link from the Committee's web site to the Hansard web site.

1.10 As not everyone has access to the Internet, copies of the Committee's reports, submissions and Hansard transcripts are also available on request from the Committee's secretariat in Parliament House, Canberra.

### **Acknowledgements**

1.11 The Committee wishes to thank everyone who made written submissions, gave evidence at hearings or contributed in some other way to the inquiry. The Committee particularly wishes to thank Defence officers and consultants who assisted with the site inspections in Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne.