

## Introduction

### Referral of Work

- 1.1 On 16 June 2005 the proposal to construct extensions to the Commonwealth Scientific Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) Minerals Laboratory at Waterford, Perth, Western Australia (WA) was referred to the Public Works Committee for consideration and report to the Parliament in accordance with the provisions of the *Public Works Committee Act 1969* (the Act).<sup>1</sup>
- 1.2 The Hon Dr Sharman Stone MP, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Finance and Administration, advised the House that the total estimated cost of the proposed works was \$12 million. She reported that, subject to parliamentary approval, tenders would be called early in 2006, with completion of construction anticipated for mid-2007.

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<sup>1</sup> Extract from the *Votes and Proceedings of the House of Representatives*, No. 40, Thursday, 16 June 2005

## Location

- 1.3 The CSIRO Minerals facility occupies a 2.95 hectare site within the Curtin Precinct of the town of Victoria park, WA, south of the Perth central business district (CBD). The site is bounded by Canning College to the north, residential development to the east, Brand Drive to the west and Conlon Street and Townsing Drive to the south.<sup>2</sup> The proposed Curtin University Chemistry Precinct will be located immediately to the west of the CSIRO Minerals site.<sup>3</sup>

## Background

- 1.4 The CSIRO Division of Minerals was established in 1994 from a merger between the CSIRO Division of Mineral Products and the Division of Minerals and Process Engineering. CSIRO conducts research through eight programs at five sites around Australia, including Waterford. The three programs based at Waterford are Alumina Production, Base Metals and Gold, which focus particularly on hydrometallurgical research for the minerals processing industry.<sup>4</sup>
- 1.5 CSIRO established a mineral processing research capability in WA in 1984.<sup>5</sup> In 1992 CSIRO minerals, together with the Curtin University of Technology (CUT), Murdoch University, the WA Department of Industry and Resources (DOIR), and a number of mineral processing companies formed the AJ Parker Cooperative Research Centre for Hydrometallurgy (Parker Centre).<sup>6</sup> The success of this program was such that CSIRO staff numbers soon outgrew available accommodation the CUT's School of Applied Chemistry. The WA Government, through DOIR, developed a new minerals research facility at Waterford. This facility, comprising the Koch and Becher buildings, was designed to accommodate 65 staff and students. The two buildings were leased by CSIRO in 1994 and 1998 respectively and the leases are ongoing.
- 1.6 The Waterford facility reached full capacity at Waterford by 2002. Subsequent growth to 70 staff and ten students has necessitated the use of

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2 Appendix C, Submission No. 1 from the CSIRO, paragraphs 58 - 59

3 *ibid*, paragraph 60

4 *ibid*, paragraphs 2 - 4

5 *ibid*, paragraph 12

6 *ibid*, paragraphs 13 - 15

temporary transportable buildings to house staff, students and support functions.<sup>7</sup>

## Inquiry Process

- 1.7 The Committee is required by the Act to consider public works over \$6 million<sup>8</sup> and report to Parliament on:
- the purpose of the work and its suitability for that purpose;
  - the need for, or the advisability of, carrying out the work;
  - whether the money to be expended on the work is being spent in the most cost effective manner;
  - the amount of revenue the work will generate for the Commonwealth, if that is its purpose; and
  - the present and prospective public value of the work.<sup>9</sup>
- 1.8 The Committee called for submissions by advertising the inquiry in *The West Australian* on Saturday, 30 July 2005. The Committee also sought submissions from relevant government agencies, local government, private organisations and individuals, who may be materially affected by or have an interest in the proposed work. The Committee subsequently placed submissions and other information relating to the inquiry on its web site in order to encourage further public participation.

## Public Hearings

- 1.9 On Thursday, 22 September 2005 the Committee visited the CSIRO Minerals Laboratory at Waterford, Perth to inspect at first hand the scope and environs of the proposed works. A confidential briefing on project

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7 *ibid*, paragraph 16

8 *Public Works Committee Act 1969*, Part III, Section 18 (8)

9 *ibid*, Section 17

costs and a public hearing were conducted in Perth later that day.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> See Appendix D for the official Hansard transcript of the evidence taken by the Committee at the public hearing held on Thursday, 22 September 2005 in Perth, WA.

