

## Introduction

### Referral of Work

- 1.1 On 1 December 2005 the proposal for the fit-out of new leased premises for the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF), Civic, ACT, was referred to the Public Works Committee for consideration and report in accordance with the provisions of the *Public Works Committee Act 1969* (the Act).<sup>1</sup> The proponent agency for this work is the DAFF.
- 1.2 The Hon Dr Sharman Stone MP, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Finance and Administration, advised the House that the estimated cost of the proposed works was \$36 million excluding GST. Subject to parliamentary approval, the proposed integrated fit-out will commence in March 2007, and is due for completion by September 2007.

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<sup>1</sup> Extract from the *Votes and Proceedings of the House of Representatives*, No. 74, Thursday 1 December 2005

## Background

### Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

- 1.3 DAFF is responsible for Australia's agricultural, fisheries, forestry and food industries. Its role is to increase the competitiveness, profitability and sustainability of these industries through:
- sustainable use and management of natural resources;
  - protection of the health and safety of Australia's plant and animal industries;
  - promotion of responsive and efficient industry;
  - provision of improved market access and performance;
  - embracing new technology and practices; and
  - assisting the development skilled, financially self-reliant producers.<sup>2</sup>

### Location

- 1.4 Currently, the majority of DAFF staff are located in the Edmund Barton Building (EBB), Kings Avenue, Barton, with some overflow into Bligh House, 6 National Circuit, Barton.<sup>3</sup>

### Inquiry Process

- 1.5 The Committee is required by the Act to consider public works over \$6 million<sup>4</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

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2 Appendix C, Submission No. 1, paragraph 1.1.1

3 *ibid*, paragraph 1.2.1

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

- the present and prospective public value of the work.<sup>5</sup>

1.6 The Committee called for submissions by advertising the inquiry in the *Canberra Times* on Saturday, 14 January 2006. The Committee also sought submissions from relevant government agencies, ACT 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.

### **Inspection and Public Hearing**

1.7 On 17 February 2006 the Committee visited DAFF's current premises and also inspected the site and environs of the proposed works. A confidential briefing from DAFF and a public hearing were held at Parliament House, Canberra, later that day.<sup>6</sup>

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5 *Public Works Committee Act 1969*, Part III, Section 17

6 See Appendix D for the official Hansard transcript of the evidence taken by the Committee at the public hearing on Friday, 17 February 2006 in Canberra