

Introduction

Referral of Work

- 1.1 On 9 February 2005⁴ the proposed construction of an ordnance breakdown facility for the Defence Science and Technology Organisation (DSTO) at Port Wakefield, South Australia, 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).¹ The proponent agency for this work was the Department of Defence (Defence).
- 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 \$8.4 million. Dr Stone noted further that, subject to parliamentary approval, the works would commence mid-2005 with a view to completion by mid-2006.

¹ Extract from the *Votes and Proceedings of the House of Representatives*, No. 11, Thursday, 9 December 2004

Background

Existing Facilities

- 1.3 Research into explosive ordnance and weapons is necessary to support deployed troops and Defence training. Currently, most ordnance testing and research is carried out at DSTO Edinburgh, near Adelaide, SA and the Proof and Experimental Establishment (P & EE) at Port Wakefield.²

Site of the Proposed Work

- 1.4 The proposed Explosive Ordnance Breakdown (EOB) facility is to be located at the site of the existing DSTO P & EE at Port Wakefield, some 100 kilometres north of Adelaide, SA. The site is within reasonable proximity to ordnance breakdown personnel based at DSTO Edinburgh.³
- 1.5 Whilst the EOB facility will be located on Commonwealth land, it was necessary for Defence to purchase some adjacent property in order to provide an appropriate safety buffer zone. Between July and November 2002, Defence purchased land from three parties. Acquisition costs to date total \$642,300 (paragraphs 31 - 32).

Inquiry Process

- 1.6 The Committee is required by the Act to consider public works over \$6 million⁴ 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

² Appendix C, Submission No. 1 from the Department of Defence, paragraph 2

³ *ibid*, paragraph 7

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

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- the present and prospective public value of the work.⁵

1.7 The Committee called for submissions by advertising the inquiry in *The Plains Producer* on Wednesday 9 March 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.

Inspection and Public Hearings

1.8 On 21 April 2005 the Committee inspected the site and environs of the proposed works, and received a commercial-in-confidence briefing on project costs. A public hearing was held in Port Wakefield later that day.⁶

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 Thursday, 21 April 2005 in Port Wakefield

