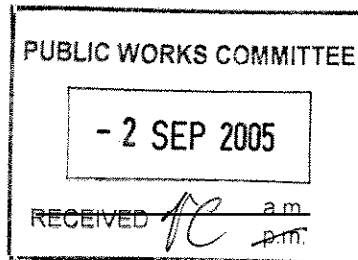




SUBMISSION 13

1st September 2005

The Chairman
Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Sir/madam

Submission

Relocation of Selected RAAF College Units to RAAF base East sale Victoria and RAAF Base Wagga Wagga, New South Wales.

I refer to recent information provided by Inquiry Secretary, Ms Vivienne Courto, that outlines the opportunity to present a submission on the Department of Defence proposal to relocate RAAF College from Pt Cook to RAAF Base Wagga Wagga, NSW, and East Sale, Vic.

This submission relates only to the proposal so far as it includes RAAF Base Wagga Wagga.

Introduction

The Riverina Regional Development Board (RRDB) is an Incorporated Association supported primarily by the NSW Department of State and Regional Development. The Board comprises 11 people from across the Riverina who have been appointed by the Minister for Regional Development for their demonstrated understanding of the region and commitment towards the continuing economic development of the Riverina Region in which the City of Wagga Wagga features as the major regional centre.

The Board activities include but are not limited to:

- Promoting regional economic development initiatives (and hence sustainable jobs) in regional NSW through,
 - Ensuring that communities work together to attain the necessary critical mass to be competitive international investment locations;
 - Marketing local government areas and regions as business locations;
 - Hosting Commonwealth and State initiatives or programs which have as their aim the strengthening of the profile of non-metropolitan regions as business locations or the attraction of skilled labour;
 - Co hosting initiatives of the NSW Government aimed at attracting investment.

The Board undertakes various projects from year to year utilising project funding that is typically obtained on a bid basis from various programs conducted by NSW



Riverina Regional Development Board

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Supported by NSW Department of State and Regional Development

Department of State and Regional Development, Federal Government's Department of Transport and Regional Services, Local Government, the private sector and indeed any other sources of funds to enable projects to proceed.

The projects are undertaken within the ambit of the Board's Strategic Plan 2004-2010 that identifies 9 interdependent industry strategies.

The Board's Vision is stated as :

The Riverina will prosper through smart industry strategies and value-adding businesses, generating sustainable long-term employment and harmonious communities...enriching lifestyles naturally

The Board's Mission is stated as:

To facilitate the appropriate and effective regional development of the Riverina through a partnership approach to the implementation of the Riverina Economic Development Strategy and related initiatives

The economic overview in the Strategic Plan notes that the regional population of the Riverina is 162,848 in an area of 76,346 square kilometers.

The economic overview also identifies major industry sectors including defence.

Extensive details of the Board's structure, strategies and projects can be accessed from the Board's website www.rrdh.com.au including a recently completed statistical profile of the region.

Support for the proposals at RAAF Base Wagga Wagga

Clearly the assertion that around 100 defence staff providing recruit training to 1200 students per year is wonderful news for the economy of Wagga Wagga and therefore the region. The city already prospers from a diverse industry sector and the presence of RAAF Base at Forest Hill and the Australian Army training base at Kapooka generates not only a strong economic outcome for the city but has an appreciable impact on the social fabric for the city.

Over many years, notwithstanding heightened security measures in recent times, an enormous amount of good will has been generated between the two Defence establishments and their personnel and the residents of Wagga Wagga and the region. Successive Officers Commanding RAAF base Wagga have warmly welcomed civic involvement in a variety of activities on the Base that have fostered this good will. A similar situation has existed for many years with Kapooka. From time to time the Officer Commanding RAAF Base and Commandant from Kapooka have served on the local Chamber of Commerce and Industry adding an enormous depth of knowledge to assist the growth and prosperity of the city and integration of defence communities with locals.

In this environment, an expansion at Forest Hill will be readily accommodated by the local and regional communities.

In terms of proposed expenditure \$66.7 million at Wagga Wagga, it is noted that this will include a significant number of personnel in construction activity and that off-site jobs will be generated for the supply, manufacture and distribution of components and materials for local and national contractors and suppliers.

The regional industry sector boasts many excellent tradesmen and companies that have experience in major construction. Additionally, the presence in Wagga Wagga of a representative of the Industry Capability Network (NSW) Ltd adds to the capability of effectively resourcing specialists and equipment used in the construction field.

As indicated, it is not only the economic benefits in the construction phase but the sustainable benefits over future years that are of significance to Wagga and the Riverina. Also the social issues should not be undervalued as Wagga Wagga has proven itself to be a welcoming community for defence personnel.

Currently funds are being sought for a feasibility study to address the various issues impacting on the proposed development of the disused Wagga Wagga to Tumbarumba railway corridor that runs from Wagga Wagga urban area, through the RAAF base at Forest Hill and on to Tumbarumba.

The proposed 1st stage involves the development of the rail corridor from Wagga Urban area to the perimeter of the RAAF Base as a walking/cycling trail (known as a 'rail trail') to enable RAAF personnel to safely and quickly commute the 10km by either bicycle or indeed by walking. This stage of the project is strongly supported by the Officer Commanding RAAF Base at Forest Hill, Wing Commander Graeme Wren and the Mayor of Wagga Wagga, Cr Kerry Pascoe, as well as the Riverina Highlands Rail Trails Committee, a sub committee of the RRDB.

The City of Wagga Wagga boasts outstanding infrastructure including Award winning sporting and recreation facilities such as the Oasis Aquatic Centre and superb parks and gardens. Additionally the City features a major Campus of the Charles Sturt University and TAFE NSW-Riverina Institute is already involved in a major contractual obligation to defence to provide tri-service training. The City also boasts attractive and affordable real estate and surrounding suburbs and villages provide excellent alternative lifestyle choices on residential and hobby farm holdings.

Wagga Wagga is the major shopping catchment for the Riverina and most national name store operations are evident in the City. Its location is strategic on the main Southern rail line, approximately midway between Sydney and Melbourne and generally Wagga is considered a major transportation hub. 128 aircraft movements per week are made from the Wagga airport that is leased from the Commonwealth by the Wagga Wagga City Council and passenger numbers are continuing to increase, with current activity being around 14,000 people per month. Commercial operations are provided as frequent daily services to Sydney and Melbourne by modern twin turbo prop aircraft operated by Rex Airlines, one of Australia's leading regional carriers, based in Wagga Wagga and Qantaslink. Both journeys take approximately one hour.

Car travel time to Sydney and Melbourne respectively can also be easily accomplished in around four and a half hours. These and many other factors support the decision to consider RAAF Base Wagga Wagga as an appropriate location for components of the RAAF College.

The proposals for RAAF Base Wagga Wagga will complement the planned upgrade for the Base and will vindicate the strong case mounted locally, during the Defence Efficiency Review, for the retention and expansion of the Base as a major training facility.

The Riverina Regional Development strongly supports the proposals by the Department of Defence to relocate elements of the RAAF College to RAAF Base at Wagga Wagga and commends the Department of Defence on its initiative and logic.

Yours faithfully



Peter Dale
Executive Officer