

Introduction

Referral of Work

- 1.1 On 7 December 2006, the proposal to redevelop the Defence Force School of Signals (DFSS), Simpson Barracks, Watsonia was referred to the Public Works Committee for consideration and report in accordance with the *Public Works Committee Act 1969* (the Act).¹ The proponent agency for this work was Defence.
- 1.2 The Hon Teresa Gambaro MP, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Foreign Affairs, advised the House that the estimated cost of the project would be \$101.3 million.²

Background

The Defence Force School of Signals

- 1.3 The Defence Force School of Signals (DFSS) is a principal Defence training facility for Communication and Information Systems/Electronic Warfare (CIS/EW) and Australian Defence Force (ADF) Command, Control,

1 Extract from the *Votes and Proceedings of the House of Representatives*, No 146, Thursday 7 December 2006

2 *ibid*

Communications, Computing and Intelligence (C4I) capability³. DFSS is the second largest training school that is operated by Defence.⁴

- 1.4 DFSS is currently located across three major campuses:
- Simpson Barracks, Watsonia, Vic.;
 - Maritime CIS Wing at HMAS CERBERUS, Vic.; and
 - EW Wing at Borneo Barracks, Carbarlah, Qld.⁵

The Site

- 1.5 Simpson Barracks, Watsonia is located in the City of Banyule, approximately 18 kilometres from Melbourne CBD. All proposed works are confined to the site which comprises approximately 55 hectares. The site has road frontages on Greensborough Road to the West and Yallambie Road to the North.⁶

Options Considered

- 1.6 Defence submitted that the following options were considered during development:
- consideration of all three main DFSS campuses; and
 - a 'green field' site.⁷
- 1.7 Defence added that the selection of Simpson Barracks was due to the following considerations:
- the 'green field' site was cost prohibitive;
 - the existence of better support facilities at Watsonia which aids in the retention of trainees and instructors; and
 - there is already a higher proportion of DFSS trainees located at Watsonia, thus making collocation more economical.⁸

3 Appendix C, Submission No. 1, paragraph 2

4 *ibid*, paragraph 3

5 *ibid*

6 *ibid*, paragraph 13

7 *ibid*, paragraph 20

8 *ibid*, paragraph 20

Inquiry Process

- 1.8 The Committee is required by the Act to consider public works over \$15 million⁹ 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.¹⁰
- 1.9 The Committee called for submissions by advertising the inquiry in *The Australian* and the *Melbourne Age* on Saturday, 16 December 2006. Submissions were also sought from relevant government agencies, local and State 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

- 1.10 On 16 February 2007, the Committee inspected the site and environs of the proposed works. A confidential briefing from Defence and a public hearing were held at Simpson Barracks, Watsonia, Vic., later that day.¹¹

⁹ *Public Works Committee Act 1969*, Part III, Section 18 (8)

¹⁰ *ibid*, Section 17

¹¹ See Appendix D for the official Hansard transcript of the evidence taken by the Committee at the public hearing on Friday, 16 February 2007 at Simpson Barracks, Watsonia.