



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

# Official Committee Hansard

JOINT COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS

**Reference: Redevelopment of Darwin Naval Base Project**

TUESDAY, 6 JULY 1999

DARWIN

BY AUTHORITY OF THE PARLIAMENT

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# JOINT COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS

Tuesday, 6 July 1999

**Members:** Mrs Moylan (*Chair*), Mrs Crosio (*Vice-Chair*), Senators Calvert, Ferguson and Murphy and Mr Forrest, Mr Hollis, Mr Lindsay and Mr Ripoll

**Senators and members in attendance:** Senators Calvert and Murphy and Mr Hollis, Mr Lindsay and Mr Ripoll

## Terms of reference for the inquiry:

Redevelopment of Darwin Naval Base Project

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**Committee met at 1.29 p.m.**

**TEMPORARY CHAIR (Senator Calvert)**—I declare open this public hearing into the Darwin Naval Base redevelopment. This project was referred to the Joint Committee on Public Works for consideration and report to the parliament by the House of Representatives on 31 March 1999, at an estimated outturn cost of \$12.4 million. In accordance with section 17(3) of the Public Works Committee Act 1969:

- (3) In considering and reporting on a public work, the Committee shall have regard to—
- (a) the stated purpose of the work and its suitability for that purpose;
  - (b) the necessity for, or the advisability of, carrying out the work;
  - (c) the most effective use that can be made, in the carrying out of the work, of the moneys to be expended on the work;
  - (d) where the work purports to be of a revenue-producing character, the amount of revenue that it may reasonably be expected to produce; and
  - (e) the present and prospective public value of the work.

This morning the committee inspected the Darwin Naval Base, including the sites proposed for the components of the work in this reference. This afternoon the committee will hear evidence from the Department of Defence; the Northern Territory departments of Lands, Planning and Environment and of Industry and Business; the Darwin City Council; Alderman Ian Fraser and Darwin Ship Repair and Engineering.

[1.30 p.m.]

**DIETRICH, Commander Edwin Stewart David, Director, Maritime Support Development, Department of Defence**

**GERSEKOWSKI, Mr John Neville, Northern Territory Manager, Gutteridge, Haskins & Davey Pty Ltd**

**KEANE, Major Timothy Frances, Project Officer, Defence Estate Organisation, Department of Defence**

**KELLY, Brigadier Garry Ross, Director General Project Delivery, Defence Estate Organisation, Department of Defence**

**OVERTON, Captain William Robert, ADC, Royal Australian Navy, Commanding Officer, HMAS *Coonawarra***

**TEMPORARY CHAIR**—Welcome. The committee has received the submission from the Department of Defence dated May 1999. Do you wish to propose any amendments to that?

**Brig. Kelly**—We have no substantial amendments to make, but I will pass some typographical changes to the secretary after the meeting, with your agreement.

**TEMPORARY CHAIR**—It is proposed that the submission and associated papers be received, taken as read and be incorporated in the transcript of evidence. Do members have any objections? There being no objection, it is so ordered.

*The documents read as follows—*

**TEMPORARY CHAIR**—Would a representative of the department now read a summary statement to the committee, after which we will proceed to questions?

**Brig. Kelly**—This proposal seeks approval to redevelop the Darwin Naval Base in the Northern Territory to facilitate the relocation of four additional Fremantle class patrol boats and one landing craft from southern ports to Darwin. The Darwin Naval Base was constructed between 1980 and 1982 to support up to six patrol boats operating in northern Australian waters. Navy subsequently commissioned two medium works projects to increase the number of hardstands in 1992 and the administrative, stores and workshop facilities in 1993. Limited facilities for an Army watercraft unit equipped with four small landing craft were constructed in 1994 as an element of the Army's Larrakeyah Barracks redevelopment project.

Since the initial development, the number of vessels home ported at the Darwin Naval Base has increased to six patrol boats, one heavy landing craft, four army landing craft, two lighters and two work boats. The lighters and work boats are operated by Defence Maritime Services, a civilian contractor within Darwin Naval Base. Navy now intends to relocate a further four patrol boats and one additional heavy landing craft to Darwin to realise operational efficiencies by home porting the vessels closer to their main area of operations. The proposed facilities are needed to overcome existing occupational health and safety issues and operational deficiencies and to provide wharfage space and support facilities for the additional minor war vessels to be home ported at Darwin.

The redevelopment work and additional facilities required for Darwin Naval Base to safely and efficiently fulfil its role are the construction of a new, 146-metre-long wharf for patrol boats, the realignment of cope points and the extension of the existing wharf to cater for landing craft, the realignment of the existing boat ramp, the provision of three additional minor war vessel hardstands, the provision of additional fuel storage and fuel reconditioning facilities, the construction of an undercover naval stores receipt and dispatch area, and the relocation of Army's 36 Water Transport Troop into the Darwin Naval Base main complex. The project has been discussed with both the federal and Territory environmental authorities, and an environmental certificate of compliance for the project is being prepared.

Territory and local government officials have been consulted, and all parties have indicated general support for the proposal. Defence has commissioned an issues identification study to guide the way ahead in broader public consultations. The project is cost capped at \$12.4 million in March 1999 prices. Subject to parliamentary approval, works are planned to commence in December 1999 and be completed by June 2001.

**TEMPORARY CHAIR**—Captain Overton, given you are planning to increase the number of patrol craft from six to 10 with these \$12-million additions, what effect will that have on your operational capacity from Darwin Naval Base?

**Capt. Overton**—The major role of the patrol boats, fishery surveillance and interdiction, is based on the effort to the north of Australia. The six patrol boats that are currently based here are supplemented regularly by boats deploying from both Sydney and Perth to make sure that we give the area the coverage that is necessary. Having those boats based here in

Darwin will effectively give us one additional patrol boat by virtue of the time not needed to undertake the transit from Sydney and Perth to Darwin.

**TEMPORARY CHAIR**—I suppose the crews would be able to spend more time with their families if they were based here in Darwin. Would that be right?

**Capt. Overton**—Yes, that is correct.

**Mr HOLLIS**—Captain Overton, looking at the proposed plans that show the existing wharf and the proposed wharf, it seems to me that we are going to reduce the amount of space in the harbour considerably. Will it still be adequate to do what you have to do, given that you will have extra Fremantle class vessels there and, with the new wharf, reduce the amount of water space you have in the harbour?

**Capt. Overton**—That is true. The current manoeuvring area will be reduced but, if you recall, there is a series of buoys inside the breakwater that will roughly align with where the wharfs are going to be. The boats do not manoeuvre around those buoys at the moment, at any rate. The Fremantles are inherently very manoeuvrable boats. The landing craft is also very manoeuvrable.

**Mr HOLLIS**—Brigadier Kelly, there has been a suggestion that Navy should look at relocating the facility to East Arm. What is your comment on that?

**Brig. Kelly**—This was looked at three or four years ago when the Chief Minister for the Northern Territory raised it with our minister. At the time, we looked at it and decided that the changes that we proposed to make during this project were not sufficient to justify looking for a new site. The number of additional boats, the number of people going into the base, will not significantly change the way in which the base will operate. There is no justification to go to the capital cost of relocating the very significant infrastructure that we have there to operate from East Arm, which we consider is not at this stage an appropriate site for a naval base of that type, in any case. Its primary use in the foreseeable future will be of a heavy industrial or heavy resource movement nature.

**Mr HOLLIS**—This project is worth just over \$12 million or \$13 million. Over the years, an amount of money has been put into the existing facilities. As an estimate, what would be the cost of going to a completely new area, such as East Arm or somewhere else, and establishing what we already have, with the \$12 million? What would we be looking at?

**Brig. Kelly**—I suggest a figure of at least \$50 million would be a starting point.

**Mr LINDSAY**—I have some questions in relation to the written evidence that was provided to us, of which I think you have a copy. I need to clarify the first line of page 1 of the executive summary, which says:

This proposal seeks approval to redevelop Darwin Naval Base . . .

Is 'redevelop' the word that you wanted, or is it 'upgrade'?

**Brig. Kelly**—‘Redevelop’ is a word we tend to use when we are undertaking major works, including refurbishment works, in a base. I would agree that ‘upgrade’ would perhaps be a more appropriate term here, given that much of the work is a new capital investment rather than a refurbishment, although I think you would call the existing wharf works a redevelopment. I would not argue that it should be ‘upgrade.’

**Mr LINDSAY**—There seems to be an inconsistency between point 12 on page 4 and point 75 on page 14, which are talking about the number of staff. Point 12 on page 4 says there will be approximately 130 additional personnel. At a briefing this morning I think we were told 180. Can we first of all deal with that question, and then I will take you to the bit on page 14. Is it 180 and not 130?

**Capt. Overton**—The 180 this morning was my error. It is 130. That 130 is made up of the four Fremantles at 25 people each, which is 100, and 30 people—made up of 14 for the LCH and 16 for the maintenance support staff that are coming up.

**Mr LINDSAY**—Point 75 on page 14, starting at the end of the fourth line down, states:

. . . the overall number of Navy personnel will remain basically the same . . .

Is it correct to say that that statement is correct in the Darwin area but not at the Darwin Naval Base?

**Capt. Overton**—In terms of the number of sailors being supported in the Darwin area, the numbers will remain basically the same. There are reductions in the number of naval personnel related to the garrison support contract and technology changes at the Naval Communication Station, Darwin, and Shoal Bay Receiving Station.

**Mr LINDSAY**—The reason behind that is that there has been some evidence, which we will hear later, of some residents being concerned about an increase in the number of people. What would be the actual increase in numbers going to the port every day?

**Capt. Overton**—Potentially it is that 130, but a lot of them will actually be at sea in their patrol boats. If everyone were alongside, then potentially there would be 130 additional people going to and from Darwin Naval Base each day.

**Mr LINDSAY**—But, in practice, that will not happen?

**Capt. Overton**—In practice, that will not happen because the majority of the boats will be at sea.

**Mr LINDSAY**—Point 13 on page 4 states:

The proposed facilities are needed to overcome existing occupational health and safety issues . . .

What are those issues and, in the scale of things, how important are they to overcome?

**Capt. Overton**—The occupational health and safety issues relate to the current configuration use of the wharf. We have three shoreside berths that are not aligned with the



service provision points of which there are two and which are designed to be for the two-berth configuration. That means that we lead high-power cables along the wharf to ships that are not immediately adjacent to it. It also means that the ladder wells that people use to get on and off the ships with the tidal range are not aligned to the normal entry and exit points on the ships.

**Mr LINDSAY**—Point 15 states:

The mooring of these vessels at dolphins creates its own occupational health and safety problems in that access to the vessels is gained via small boats.

Is accessing a boat by a boat really a health and safety problem?

**Capt. Overton**—It is if you prefer to be alongside because it is safer. Egress and entry by a small boat means you have to go alongside the boat and climb up a ladder to get on board, with the potential for slipping off the ladder, although we do it at sea as a matter of course during our boarding processes. So our sailors are trained to do that.

**Mr LINDSAY**—We looked at other areas in the city for alternative berthing arrangements. Your evidence on that would be that, if you berthed these additional Fremantle class patrol boats, say, at Fort Hill, you would not have access to the hardstand area and you would have to take them back anyway if you wanted to pull them out of the water. From an economic point of view, it would not be worth considering basing existing facilities at Fort Hill.

**Capt. Overton**—It is even more fundamental than that in the sense that Fort Hill, Stokes Hill and Iron Ore do not provide us with services alongside where we can turn the engines and generators off. We would have to continue to operate the on-board ship services.

**Mr LINDSAY**—In relation to the services alongside, I noted in the briefing this morning that you provide two electrical services. One is the standard 415 volt, 50 hertz supply, but you had a 440 volt, 60 hertz supply. Why do you have two different supplies?

**Capt. Overton**—The Fremantle class uses a 60-hertz cycle, but we regularly support survey motor launches that come from Cairns that use a 50-hertz configuration.

**Mr LINDSAY**—It is really not related to this inquiry, but why would you use a 60-hertz system that is not standard in Australia? It is an American standard.

**Capt. Overton**—It is a Defence-wide standard for all our ships, except those that are built to commercial standards like the survey motor launches.

**Mr LINDSAY**—The Air Force uses 400 hertz. In point 70, on page 13, you say:

The design of all power supply and electrical and mechanical equipment will include—

and this is the important bit—

an assessment of energy use applying life cycle costing techniques and power demand analysis.

Can you explain to me what that is and what it means? What will you be doing?

**Mr Gersekowski**—That is relating primarily to the additional office facilities and the instigation of building management systems in those systems to—

**Mr LINDSAY**—It is not to do with the supply to the ships; it is in the buildings?

**Mr Gersekowski**—That is correct.

**Mr LINDSAY**—What is a ‘life cycle costing technique’?

**Mr Gersekowski**—That is looking at both the capital costs and the operation and maintenance costs and getting the optimum balance between the capital cost and the maintenance cost to give you the lowest effective overall cost over the life of the facility.

**Mr LINDSAY**—On page 14 in point 78, under ‘Project Delivery’, it talks about ‘civil and marine works package or packages for wharf construction’ but, in the line above it, it says:

The project will be delivered as two or more packages . . .

In a briefing this morning, there was some question about what the packages might be. I just read that as a bit iffy, but you might be saying that you want to keep your flexibility. Can you explain to me what your view is as to how this whole project might be delivered?

**Brig. Kelly**—We have not fully defined the way this will be completely delivered, but the broad intent is that the land based works, including the excavation for the additional hardstands, will be delivered by a head contract. It could be that we will break that up into several head contracts, one perhaps satisfying a building contractor and one perhaps satisfying a civil contractor. The intent for the marine based facilities—namely, the wharf, the amendments to the existing wharf and the realignment of the boat ramp—will be done as a design and construct package.

**Mr LINDSAY**—Thank you. The last area that I would like to explore is in relation to the concerns of residents of Packard Street. They say to me that they do not want any more noise, and you have given some earlier evidence on that. The second thing that they say is, ‘Let’s not put any more capital expenditure on that site,’ because it probably means that it is going to be there for a lot longer than perhaps they would like it there. Would you like to offer some comments on noise and what the future of that particular site might be?

**Brig. Kelly**—Defence is sensitive to the issue of noise in residential areas, and we are aware that there have been complaints in the past as a result of vehicle traffic through Packard Street—I believe in particular for heavy vehicles. There will be an increase in what I would call light domestic traffic as a result of this proposal—namely, people driving into the base—and there will be some increase in deliveries into the base as a result of additional boats being home ported there.

In my response to an earlier letter on this proposal, I indicated that I believe it is fair to consider compensators. The compensator that I refer to in this instance is the movement of a significant Army unit—an Army engineer support squadron—which at the end of this year will move from Larrakeyah to Robertson Barracks. That unit has about 50 people currently at Larrakeyah—50 regulars and about 10 or 12 reservists, I believe. The movement of those people could be offset against the increase, but in particular the number of heavy vehicles that that unit holds will no longer have to traverse Packard Street. In our inspection this morning it was evident that there were probably in the order of 30 heavy dump trucks, plant transporters, bulldozers, graders and that sort of equipment stored and used from Larrakeyah Barracks. That will cease at the end of this year.

I would suggest that it is those types of vehicles that have been creating most of the noise nuisance in Packard Street, if it exists, and that much of that will go away. In fact, all of that noise caused by that unit will go away by the end of this year when they move to new facilities at Robertson Barracks.

**Mr LINDSAY**—In terms of compensation, you do not think there will be any net increase in noise, approximately, whatsoever?

**Brig. Kelly**—I would be prepared to speculate that, even though there may be more domestic cars coming into the area, it would be more than offset by the reduction in heavier vehicles. However, as we have heard this morning, sailors who are accommodated at HMAS *Coonawarra* tend to travel by bus. As Army leaves and the increase in Navy people is picked up in Larrakeyah, more and more of those people presumably will get married quarters or perhaps living in accommodation within Larrakeyah, which would further reduce the domestic travel.

**Mr LINDSAY**—Looking at the horizon out to perhaps 15 or 20 years, is it Navy's intention to maintain that base? There is not much option for further redevelopment because of the constraints at the site. Would that be your evidence to the committee today?

**Brig. Kelly**—We see a long-term requirement for Darwin Naval Base and I doubt that the equations will change over 20, 30 or 40 years in terms of where we should be. We see no change in the medium to long term for our need at Larrakeyah.

**Mr RIPOLL**—Captain Overton, I would like to ask about the capacity of the harbour you have. When you get all the boats in the new wharf, will that be its maximum capacity?

**Capt. Overton**—For berthing?

**Mr RIPOLL**—For berthing or for movements. On the map it looks a bit tight. When you have all nine ships moored, will there be room for extra movements or extra ships to come in?

**Capt. Overton**—You can certainly have ships coming in. Indeed, the maximum number of ships we have had on the current configuration is 10. That involves five Fremantles berthed out board of five Fremantles and in that case it is very difficult for the front row of Fremantles to enter or depart the berth. It is restricted, but we do not anticipate having all of

the vessels there all of the time. The majority of the vessels will, under normal circumstances, be at sea on patrol. It is in the cyclone season that we will seek to have the vessels there, normally out of the water.

**Mr RIPOLL**—So for future consideration, what is currently there is pretty well maximum capacity?

**Capt. Overton**—Yes.

**Mr RIPOLL**—In view of that, how difficult will it be to launch the boats. If you have them all in and you have to launch a particular one out, you would have to set that up prior to berthing them. Would that matter or would you just move them out as you need them?

**Capt. Overton**—We manage our berthing now. With the skilled people that operate the boats I do not foresee a problem.

**Mr RIPOLL**—Going back to the issue of Packard Street, there is going to be an increase in the weapons movement through there. What sort of increase are we looking at?

**Capt. Overton**—We are going to add another four Fremantles to the current six. That would inherently mean at least a 40 per cent increase in the number of transportations of ammunition down Packard Street.

**Mr RIPOLL**—What extra safety precautions are you taking for this extra movement?

**Capt. Overton**—There will be no additional safety requirements because the current moving of ammunition is inherently safe. It will just be a greater volume of activity, not any less safe.

**Mr RIPOLL**—Is any consideration given to the hours?

**Capt. Overton**—We manage our hours to be outside the peak time, in particular outside school entry and school exit times.

**TEMPORARY CHAIR**—Captain, you did tell us this morning when we were looking at the ammunition you used in those ships that they could not go off by themselves; they have to be triggered.

**Capt. Overton**—That is an important point, Senator. We are talking about ammunition not munitions or explosives. The ammunition is packed in UN approved containers and transported in accordance with NATO safety requirements that are accepted throughout the world. The ammunition has to have something done with it for it to go off. In the case of this ammunition, it would have to be a very extreme fire for the ammunition to go off. In most cases the explosive element would normally burn.

**TEMPORARY CHAIR**—Where is the transfer of that ammunition done? At the wharf or when you get out?

**Capt. Overton**—The ammunition is transported from the storage facilities at RAAF Base Darwin down the Stuart Highway turning right into Mitchell Street then left into Packard Street in an authorised and signed vehicle with an approved carrying officer on board. The truck is then driven into a landing craft which is taken out to a patrol boat at anchor in the harbour. The ammunition is then transferred to the patrol boat when the landing craft is alongside the patrol boat in the harbour.

**Mr RIPOLL**—Captain Overton, you said before that there would be more movements of weapons. Does that mean more physical movement in terms of trucks?

**Capt. Overton**—A greater number of movements.

**Mr RIPOLL**—I just want to get that clear. So it will not necessarily mean any more traffic.

**Capt. Overton**—There will be a greater number of movements to and from the RAAF base. That is purely related to the additional number of patrol boats that are here.

**Senator MURPHY**—With respect to that, let us assume for a minute that there was a wartime situation. What happens with regard to the loading of ordnance in that respect, say for larger ships?

**Capt. Overton**—We have no capacity to support larger ships out of Darwin Naval Base.

**Senator MURPHY**—Perhaps not out of Darwin Naval Base, but you certainly do off the commercial facilities.

**Capt. Overton**—In a hostile environment we would normally transfer ammunition to our major fleet units at sea.

**Senator MURPHY**—From where?

**Capt. Overton**—From HMAS *Success*. If that sea capacity was not there we would do the transfer in Darwin harbour at East Arm using the loading ramp at East Arm.

**Senator MURPHY**—Going back to the regulations you spoke about, they are essentially the regulations that are accepted throughout the country and that relate to ordnance movements up and down the east coast. They are the same applications. Is that right?

**Capt. Overton**—Precisely the same applications as the armament that moves through Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide and Perth. The same rules apply here and we apply them exactly the same way. Indeed, our traffic flows here are much less significant than they are in the other capital cities.

**Senator MURPHY**—Has the Territory government set any regulations over and above those?

**Capt. Overton**—I will have to take advice on that one, Senator.

**Senator MURPHY**—I want to move to another subject—the extensions of the existing wharf. You plan to extend either end with a walkway and mooring pylons. Will you put one extra pylon at each end?

**Capt. Overton**—I do not know the number of pylons, but there will be sufficient to provide a walkway and it will be at each end of the wharf.

**Senator MURPHY**—I am asking because of the cost associated with that. I should have asked you this this morning and I apologise for the fact that I did not. I was just curious about the cost.

**Brig. Kelly**—As opposed to extending it at one end only?

**Senator MURPHY**—No, just the cost of extending it. As I understand, it is a walkway.

**Brig. Kelly**—Yes.

**Senator MURPHY**—It extends 15 feet at one end?

**Capt. Overton**—Thirteen metres at the seaward end and 17 metres at the land end.

**Senator MURPHY**—I am just trying to understand the cost identified in the costings.

**Mr Gersekowski**—It is not just the extension, but also the relocation and adjustment of the cope points and the access ladders. They make up a significant proportion of those costs as well.

**Senator MURPHY**—It has modified the existing services, including the catwalk extension at both ends?

**Capt. Overton**—Yes.

**Senator MURPHY**—I do not have any other questions at the moment.

**TEMPORARY CHAIR**—How much consultation had taken place with this project? Have you gone through the normal channels for a proposal of this magnitude?

**Brig. Kelly**—We have had preliminary consultations with all the key players in the Northern Territory government, with the local council and with the primary school, for example. At this stage we have not conducted what I would call final consultations. We have had a consultant undertake an issues identification study which has confirmed some of the issues that have already been raised here today.

We will now pick those up and undertake detailed consultation to determine the way ahead, in particular during the construction phase. I think most of the concerns regarding noise, dust, vibration and so on relate specifically to the construction phase. Once we have identified what people's concerns are and what local authority concerns are, we can incorporate those into our plans: firstly, by requiring the contractors to identify how they

might ameliorate those effects as part of their proposals, and we then take that into account as part of our assessment of our value for money approach, and, secondly, by ensuring that the concerns are incorporated into the project environmental management plans that we would expect the contractor to produce.

**TEMPORARY CHAIR**—Captain Overton said this morning when we had the inspection that you have had something like 18 American ships visit the Port of Darwin this year. If ships were to visit, would they be using this facility or would they use the main port?

**Capt. Overton**—No, they use principally Stokes Hill wharf, and occasionally Fort Hill and Iron Ore wharves. We cannot support them at this base. The foreign vessels that we can and do support at Darwin Naval Base are Singaporean, Malaysian and Filipino, Papua New Guinean patrol boats and other small patrol boats.

**TEMPORARY CHAIR**—But the Darwin Naval Base itself is primarily just to service the Fremantle patrol boats and landing craft. That is the sole aim?

**Capt. Overton**—Yes.

**TEMPORARY CHAIR**—I do not know whether I should bring it up at this stage, but I did raise the matter privately with you this morning. You do have a unique slipping system there and it did receive a bit of nationwide attention last year. Are you satisfied now that that type of accident will not happen again, as much as you possibly can be?

**Capt. Overton**—Firstly, I plead guilty on the first count, and on the second count I am absolutely confident that the measures we have now put in place mean that the causes of the previous accident cannot be repeated.

**TEMPORARY CHAIR**—Are there any systems similar to this anywhere else in the world? It is rather unique in Australia, I believe, where you can actually bring the ships in.

**Capt. Overton**—Darwin Ship Repair and Engineering have a similar but greater capacity lifting system in Darwin and there are many syncrolifts around the world, but we are the only Navy facility that has this capability.

**TEMPORARY CHAIR**—While we are talking about Darwin Ship Repair and Engineering, will this proposal mean that their workload will lessen, will it mean business as usual or will it perhaps increase their business?

**Capt. Overton**—I would anticipate that there would be greater opportunities for all companies supporting patrol boat maintenance in Darwin.

**TEMPORARY CHAIR**—You are hoping for a flow-on effect through the community, obviously?

**Capt. Overton**—Yes.

**Mr HOLLIS**—Around the Army reserve on the Larrakeyah land there are several Aboriginal sacred sites. What about where the Navy is? Are there any sacred sites there or any that have been identified?

**Brig. Kelly**—None has been identified. When we are undertaking the excavation we have undertaken to be on the lookout for items of heritage significance and, if anything is found, we will take the appropriate action.

**Mr HOLLIS**—A lot of the land there is already reclaimed land that we are working on. I imagine there would not be any rare or exotic flora, fauna or anything there, would there?

**Brig. Kelly**—I would not think so. The area where the hardstand is is excavated. It is not reclaimed land. The area that 36 Water Transport Squadron is located on, I believe, is reclaimed, but the rest of it is part of the original cliff line.

**Mr HOLLIS**—The hardstand that is going to be excavated will go down level with the existing facility.

**Brig. Kelly**—That is correct. It has one or two metres across its width and it cuts back another couple of metres into the cliff on one side, I believe, but it does not change the cliff line as viewed from either further along the coast or from out to sea. The changes to that excavation will not be obvious, except when standing within the existing hardstand area.

**TEMPORARY CHAIR**—There will be no materials coming off site?

**Brig. Kelly**—No. The intention is that all materials from that excavation will be dumped adjacent to the 36 Water Transport Squadron area on that reclaimed land. That will raise the area by about 1.5 metres, which will assist in protection against storm surge, but from the point of view of your question, none of the excavated material is planned to be taken off site. We will have to take the normal steps to control dust and so on when we put it down on that area near 36 Water Transport Squadron.

**Mr HOLLIS**—Either the Australian Heritage Commission or Environment Australia seemed to think that—not to put too fine a point on it—you had jumped the gun a little.

**Brig. Kelly**—Yes. I believe that was a misunderstanding which has now been clarified. When we first looked at this project about four years ago, it was intended that the hydrographic ships might be home ported here, and that was going to require significantly greater works than we are now talking about. For a number of reasons, that was not pursued.

However, at the time we did note that it would cause a greater environmental impact and we produced a notice of intent, which was sent to Environment Australia when we were discussing this proposal with them purely for background information and for advice. They then took the view that, because they had only seen our NOI, we had not referred it properly. We had never intended to refer it to Environment Australia. We had simply discussed it with them as part of our normal consultation process. We have now received a letter from Environment Australia which clarifies that, I believe. Perhaps I can read the most relevant sentence. It simply says:



Further to our discussions of 21 June, and based on the information provided, we envisage that the proposal will have no major environmental impacts based on good engineering practices being adopted.

And they note that we do not intend to refer it to them. Perhaps for completeness I should table that document for evidence.

**Mr HOLLIS**—Thank you.

**Mr LINDSAY**—In relation to the problem that occurred in Cullen Bay, if that were to occur at the Darwin Naval Base could that in any way prejudice the expenditure of the moneys that you are currently seeking?

**Capt. Overton**—The black stripe mussel infestation at Cullen Bay, at Tipperary Waters and the so-called duck pond to the east of us here was a land locked, still water activity. We had Defence Force divers from the Navy, Army and Air Force do a thorough check of this base here and there was no evidence of any infestation found. Noting that the water body here changes very regularly, I am confident that such an infestation would not occur here. Were it to occur, of course, then it would have a significant impact upon our ability to do the work.

**Mr RIPOLL**—This morning we saw the new catamaran released by the Navy. Can you explain where that is being moored?

**Capt. Overton**—It is being berthed at the RoRo wharf, the roll on, roll off wharf, between Fort Hill wharf and Iron Ore wharf. That is its home, subject to commercial pressures. It will not be berthed here. It can berth here, but if we berth it here we cannot get anyone else in. So we will not berth it here. If there is commercial pressure to use the roll on, roll off wharf, it will either move to Fort Hill, East Arm or Iron Ore. If none of those is available, it will go to head and stern buoys in midstream.

**Mr RIPOLL**—There is currently a two-year lease on it. Are there any long-term plans for it to be based at the Darwin Naval Base?

**Capt. Overton**—No.

**Senator MURPHY**—Can I ask you a question regarding the existing groyne that is there to protect against tidal surge et cetera. In the drawings in figure 5 in the papers, the groyne would appear to run out to the pylon upon which the new wharf is to be built. As I understand it from the explanation this morning, that groyne is designed to withstand a category 5 cyclone—or whatever the rating is. Above that it will crumble down. If it crumbles down, will that have any impact on the construction that you put in there? Has that been taken into account?

**Mr Gersekowski**—Yes, it has. In the event of a large category 5 type cyclone, the top of the existing groyne will collapse and it will act as an underwater breakwater for the suppression of the waves coming from the harbours. In other words, the waves hitting our new jetty will not be the 2½ metre high waves that will be out in the harbour; they will be down to one metre. You are quite correct: there will be some flow-on effect when the groyne

collapses. Some material will go down the banter. Part of the design criteria for designing the new wharf will be to handle that event.

**Senator MURPHY**—Most of it, if it is going to be attacked from the outside, will wash down the banter into the inside. Is this drawing accurate in terms of the pylon locations and the groyne?

**Mr Gersekowski**—It is correct for part of them. The new wharf is not parallel to the breakwater, but certainly in parts of it, where it is close, the groyne will be close to the existing jetty. However, you will note that a major part of the wharf is clear of the groyne. In fact, it is just some of the ancillary facilities that are outside of it.

**Senator MURPHY**—So you will take that into account when considering the strength of the pylons?

**Mr Gersekowski**—Yes. It will form part of the design basis for those particular pylons.

**Mr HOLLIS**—I do not want to labour the point that there is not a lot of room left there because it has been explained. But it would seem to me that if we do this work, that would be maximum capacity for the Darwin Naval Base. It seems to me that with the onshore facilities—the hardstanding area, the building and so on—there is not much room for you to move anywhere else. Unless the existing breakwater were considerably expanded, there would not be much room there. This seems to me to be the total work that could be achieved at the naval base, given the limitations of geography.

**Capt. Overton**—There is one further possible option: to extend the new 146-metre wharf to 190 metres. That is regarded as an option having regard to the possibility that what replaces the Fremantle may be longer than the Fremantle. That would allow us to support a 55-metre patrol boat at Darwin Naval Base.

**Mr HOLLIS**—What are we looking at: 2008, 2010?

**Capt. Overton**—2008.

**Mr HOLLIS**—I see. Am I correct in thinking that what you can do on shore there is somewhat limited?

**Capt. Overton**—We would have to redesign the hardstanding to accommodate a longer replacement for a vessel like the Fremantle at the moment. A 55-metre vessel would not fit. As you look up the hill, you would have to move the road at the left-hand side hardstanding to extend those hardstandings.

**Mr HOLLIS**—But that is in the future somewhat.

**Senator MURPHY**—Could I just ask a follow-up question to that? Brigadier Kelly, in your letter in response to a submission received from Alderman Fraser, I think it was—I am curious because we often read from Defence that they are not presently planning any development—it says that Defence is ‘not presently planning’ to expand the capability of

Darwin Naval Base beyond that outlined in the evidence. I always find that an interesting statement.

**Brig. Kelly**—I could just as easily have said ‘is not planning’. There are no plans to further develop Darwin Naval Base. I take the subtlety of your question.

**TEMPORARY CHAIR**—Any more questions? Thank you. We will recall you at the conclusion of the other evidence.

[2.17 p.m.]

**GRONOW, Mr Neil, Deputy Secretary, Department of Lands, Planning and Environment**

**ALMOND, Mr John, Acting Executive Director, Industry Development, Department of Industry and Business**

**TEMPORARY CHAIR**—Welcome. The committee has received a submission from the Department of Lands, Planning and Environment dated 29 June 1999. Do you wish to make any amendment to that submission?

**Mr Gronow**—No.

**TEMPORARY CHAIR**—It is proposed that the submission be received, taken as read and incorporated in the transcript of evidence. Do members have any objections? There being no objection, it is so ordered.

*The submission read as follows—*

**TEMPORARY CHAIR**—I now invite you to make a short opening statement in support of your submission and then we will proceed to questions.

**Mr Gronow**—I will recap on the main points of the submission. Our submission is relatively short, and I guess that is mainly because we have had significant consultation during the preparation of this project. We raise initially that it is recognised that the proposed works are within the existing groyne, as was discussed this morning, and are an upgrade of an existing facility. As such, they will have a minimum impact on the harbour itself. The gain, as indicated this morning, is that the Northern Territory government has no requirement for assessment under the Northern Territory Environmental Assessment Act. Obviously, there needs to be considerable continuing consultation should the project continue to proceed. The third point we make is that the impact on residents during the construction phase is an issue and that every encouragement should be given to minimising that impact in terms of accessing the site and the related noise from construction works.

The last point we make is that the Northern Territory government has a policy of supporting local business. So, we would encourage the tendering process to maximise the opportunity for local businesses to compete. The Northern Territory government supports the upgrade of the naval base as appropriate works to meet the current and expected demands in the medium term.

**TEMPORARY CHAIR**—We will go to questions. May I begin by saying that the letter from Mr Pinney representing your department said:

Formal environmental impact assessment of the redevelopment of the Darwin Naval Base under the Northern Territory Environmental Assessment Act is not warranted.

Would you like to expand on that, or explain why you made that statement?

**Mr Gronow**—As indicated in the actual submission, there has been consultation between the Commonwealth and the territory government in terms of environmental assessment and it has been accepted that the Commonwealth processes are adequate and there is no particular requirement for a formal process of assessment under our NT act.

Perhaps I could expand and say that there are two levels of assessment under the Northern Territory Environmental Assessment Act. There is a level of public environmental process, and that is a lower level, and then there is the environmental impact statement level. So we have those two levels. We are saying that this particular proposal does not warrant consideration under either of those provisions, particularly given that it is being assessed through the Commonwealth processes.

**TEMPORARY CHAIR**—Have there been any concerns expressed through the department or by the government about this development at all by any residents or groups?

**Mr Gronow**—There has been some activity in terms of the current dredging operation that has been going on down there at the naval base. That is a separate matter and no doubt it is to some degree related. In terms of that activity there has been considerable consultation with Defence and monitoring of that exercise, and there has been some comment from local

residents, but at this stage the NT government is satisfied with that particular operation. In terms of this particular process, there has been no discussion that I am aware of between the environmental assessment people and the local residents.

**Mr RIPOLL**—You say that the roads into the Darwin Naval Base are the responsibility of the Darwin City Council. Have you actually undertaken any consultation with the local residents as to the impact of the changes?

**Mr Gronow**—No, we have not.

**Mr RIPOLL**—Also, you suggest that the appointment of a project liaison officer should take place. Has that occurred?

**Mr Almond**—In the fifth paragraph it is really suggesting that the Department of Defence, through the project managers, may appoint a liaison officer, not the Northern Territory government.

**Mr RIPOLL**—That would be to deal directly with the council or any of the groups involved?

**Mr Almond**—That is correct. A person to liaise between the project managers and any people who wish to raise issues relevant to the project.

**Mr RIPOLL**—You have also said that you wish to maximise opportunities for Northern Territory businesses. How are you ensuring that that happens? What process are you going through to ensure that there is some sort of mechanism to ensure that happens?

**Mr Almond**—I guess there are two processes. One is through this process to have recognised our requirement or request that work be packaged in a way that is suitable for local contractors to be able to bid, and the second one is ensuring that the information about the project is put out to industry as widely as possible and as soon as possible.

**Mr RIPOLL**—So you will be taking that on board as a council to ensure that that happens?

**Mr Almond**—No. We are the Northern Territory government. We are not the council.

**Mr RIPOLL**—So the Northern Territory government will actually be taking that on board to make sure that happens?

**Mr Almond**—Absolutely.

**Senator MURPHY**—Have you had any consultation with the council?

**Mr Almond**—I have spoken with the council engineers to talk about traffic and ensure, as the local streets are their responsibility, that they will take some of those issues into account.

**Senator MURPHY**—I just noticed that you said in your letter that you expect that consultation has been carried out with this organisation, being the Darwin City Council, to ensure that the issue of trucks going in and out is addressed. You are aware that there has been consultation with them?

**Mr Almond**—No. I guess we are saying that we would expect that Defence in their process—and we understand they have done that—have consulted with the council.

**Senator MURPHY**—Why wouldn't you check that?

**Mr Almond**—I guess our feeling is that it is a project that is the responsibility of the Department of Defence. Our processes are such that we have not had any feedback directly from local residents, and we do know that Defence did speak of a local issues process to better understand what was happening in the local area.

**Senator MURPHY**—I can accept that the Darwin City Council has a responsibility for that, but in terms of land planning and environmental matters, so that everybody knows what everybody is doing, I would have thought that there would have been some liaison with the council—as there was with Defence and yourselves, and yourselves and the council—to understand the issues that, to me at least, seem to be linked to planning. For instance, on some of the issues with the transportation of explosive materials there ought to have been some liaison with your department.

**Mr Gronow**—There were quite a few matters of consultation during the process of preparation of the detailed paperwork and the actual works.

**Senator MURPHY**—I understand that. Quite often what we as a committee see is that everybody thinks that everybody else is doing it. When you have a state and/or federal department and/or a local government body with a matter that needs to be dealt with, it is really about the exchange of information. The liaison role should be extended so that everybody understands if there is or is not a problem that it is being dealt with and that people are being informed. You say you have had no feedback from local residents. Probably local residents would not necessarily know that they could lodge some complaint, if they had any, with the Department of Lands, Planning and Environment. They would most likely do it with the local authorities, being the council.

**Mr Almond**—In our discussions with Defence, we know that they have spoken with council on several occasions. We know that they have spoken with local residents through their consultation process. We have spoken with council and understand that council is quite satisfied with all those processes. As John said, as the project unfolds, there is certainly plenty of opportunity for anyone with any particular interest to come back and talk about any issues that they may wish to discuss.

**Senator MURPHY**—When did you know that the Department of Defence had spoken to the local council with regard to the trucks, et cetera?

**Mr Almond**—Major Tim Keane was in town in about April—and I stand to be corrected if that is wrong, but it is that order of time. He spoke with council at that stage, as I

understand it. Commodore Cox had a number of people here in May and he spoke with council at that stage also.

**Senator MURPHY**—It might have been more useful for Mr Pinney to put in his letter ‘we are aware that’, rather than ‘we expect consultation has been carried out’, which infers to me that you do not know.

**Mr Almond**—You can interpret it that way, but I accept your point.

**Mr Gronow**—Can I make a general comment and say that there is a high level of consultation between the NT government and Defence, and local government and community interests on defence issues right across the territory. That is welcomed by the NT government and is encouraged. In fact, Neil and I both sit on two of those consultation bodies and projects that are proposed and issues that come up, in terms of land use right through to community issues, are discussed at length at those consultation forums.

We would expect during the life of this particular project that there will be a continuing level of that consultation and that issues that are raised in terms of traffic, for example, are able to be dealt with perhaps as a subset of that. We are probably talking about the hours of operation and those sorts of issues, which really relate to the details of the contract and the construction processes. At this stage, we would say that they are issues that need to be addressed when it is appropriate, but should not be overlooked, and I accept your comments.

**Senator MURPHY**—I accept that there is a high level of liaison, but it sometimes concerns me that a range of evidence comes before this committee—not on this issue but on other issues—where it appears that everybody thinks that everybody else has told somebody something, and really that has not happened. I read the letter literally.

**Mr Gronow**—There is a planning process in the Northern Territory under the Planning Act—as I am sure you are aware—which is managed by the Department of Lands, Planning and Environment. That department services the planning authority, which is the development consent authority for the Territory and, if this were other than a Commonwealth project, it would go through the normal channels of that consultation with signs on the site, advertisements in papers, forums to discuss issues and liaison with local government and residents. At the end of that would be a permit which would relate to issues of construction and the like. We do not have that system for Commonwealth projects, so we seek, through consultation, to mirror those principles and ensure that there is adequate consultation and integration of those projects.

**Mr HOLLIS**—I have one question. On page 2 of your letter, in the first paragraph, it states:

In supporting this project we expect that the tendering process would be one that, wherever possible, work is packaged in a way that maximises opportunities for Northern Territory based businesses.

Over the last 10 years, the defence department have put hundreds of millions of dollars into projects in the Territory in the Robertson Barracks and other works. Do you have any cases



where concern has been expressed to you that the tendering process has not been such that Northern Territory firms can bid for projects?

**Mr Almond**—In terms of capital works, generally not. At the other end of the spectrum, there are examples where some local business houses have felt that work has gone interstate when it could have been done adequately locally, and they are issues that we work on every day of the week when they come up. We have a very close relationship with all three services here in the Territory, and I am fairly confident in saying that those instances now happen far less than they used to.

**Mr RIPOLL**—Just as a follow-up to that question, does the Northern Territory government have any assistance programs to try to help local businesses to tender for defence contracts?

**Mr Almond**—I head a defence support group of three staff, which is something that is not repeated anywhere else in the country, and our job is to maximise opportunities for Northern Territory based businesses to obtain work with Defence. So, yes, we work very hard at that.

**Mr LINDSAY**—Gentleman, the opening paragraph of your letter says that the Northern Territory government supports in principle the redevelopment. Having seen all the evidence available to you now, are you prepared to say that you would remove the words ‘in principle’ and just say that you support this redevelopment?

**Mr Gronow**—Yes, I think that is correct. We support the proposal as it stands.

**Mr LINDSAY**—In relation to the department of industry development, why do you think this development is good for Darwin? What benefits does it bring?

**Mr Almond**—We are talking about a project in the order of \$12 million to \$13 million. There are a number of local based businesses with the capacity to undertake that work and, subject to them being successful through the tender process, that work will be carried out by people who are resident in the Territory and the products will be sourced predominantly through local based businesses.

**Mr LINDSAY**—In the second paragraph of your letter, you said that in the early planning stages there were discussions about changing the alignment of the groyne. Which groyne, why did you want to change the alignment and why did you decide it could be left at the current location?

**Mr Gronow**—That was really a decision for Defence in terms of developing the project. As I understand it, the main groyne was going to be—

**Mr LINDSAY**—They were not discussions with your department?

**Mr Gronow**—No.

**Mr LINDSAY**—I have misread this.

**Mr Almond**—Consideration was given, as they said earlier, about putting larger vessels in there. There were some early discussions, but they have gone back to what you see now.

**TEMPORARY CHAIR**—As there are no further questions, I thank you for your evidence.

[2.35 p.m.]

**PUDNEY, Mr John, Acting Director, Technical Services, Darwin City Council**

**TEMPORARY CHAIR**—Welcome. This committee received a submission from the Darwin City Council dated 30 June 1999. Do you wish to propose any amendments to that submission?

**Mr Pudney**—No, thank you.

**TEMPORARY CHAIR**—It is proposed that the submission be received, taken as read and incorporated in the transcript of evidence. Do members have any objections? There being no objection, it is so ordered.

*The document read as follows—*

**TEMPORARY CHAIR**—I now invite you to make a statement in support of your submission and then we will proceed to questions.

**Mr Pudney**—Thank you. In summary, we have three important areas of concern: the operational impacts of the proposal once it is completed; the impacts during the construction process; and a request for a review of whether the facility should be somewhere else—that is, East Arm Port.

On the operational impacts, whilst I heard discussion earlier today and we have discussed traffic movements with the officers of Defence, it is the peak movements that could have potential effects. Obviously, when the ships are out of harbour there is a minimal impact on the local roads, but during exercises or during peak activities there could be a number of heavy vehicles and, depending on the times of their movements, they could adversely affect the local residents. In particular, the construction aspect clearly has a greater potential to affect the residents in the short term, and we ask that they be given due consideration. I am happy to answer any questions about that.

**TEMPORARY CHAIR**—The Darwin City Council submission has only come to us in recent days. Regarding traffic, at paragraph 1.1 of your letter, you said:

At the completion of the works, additional vehicular movements particularly service vehicles including heavy vehicle movements, will occur.

During our inspection this morning and at our briefings, it was pointed out to us—and I think it was pointed out here again today—that, in fact, by the end of this year the engineering squadron that is based at Larrakeyah, which has quite a significant number of heavy vehicles, will be departing and going to Robertson Barracks. Would that be something that the Darwin City Council would welcome?

**Mr Pudney**—Most definitely. We certainly thank the efforts of Captain Overton in the way he has worked through that with council. So it is welcome, and I am sure the local residents await that movement.

**TEMPORARY CHAIR**—If and when that occurs—and it has been said to us that it is going to occur—then wouldn't the heavy vehicle movements actually decrease rather than increase? The vehicles that we were shown this morning that frequent the naval base are only three-tonne trucks.

**Mr Pudney**—That is a good point. We do not have detailed figures of what vehicles the defence forces use, and we have not seen any detailed traffic analysis. We make the point that there is potential for these things to happen. We do not base our comments on exact movements that we know of, because a lot of the details have not been forwarded to council and may in fact be of a sensitive nature. We have traffic counts on the existing truck movements; the percentage of heavy vehicles is not great, but we do have complaints from the residents. We do not have a firm figure for the actual numbers, but we certainly have evidence of the community making comment to council.

**TEMPORARY CHAIR**—You say you have complaints from the residents. Is the nature of the complaints the volume of traffic, the noise factor or the fact that they are heavy vehicles? What are the majority of complaints about?

**Mr Pudney**—Complaints about noise and speeding have been the two major issues. The noise is generally from heavy vehicles. Traffic speeding is generally by lighter trucks and cars. We have recently introduced a 40-kilometre per hour speed limit on the road as a trial to help with that issue.

**TEMPORARY CHAIR**—You said that you do regular traffic counts to see whether the traffic is increasing or decreasing.

**Mr Pudney**—Yes, we have done a number of counts over the last five years. Traffic has increased but not substantially. We are talking about increases of 15 per cent or thereabouts.

**TEMPORARY CHAIR**—Would Packard Street have more traffic than others in the CBD?

**Mr Pudney**—Packard Street's major traffic movements come from the base, but of course the base has a significant residential area as well. Packard Street feeds into Mitchell Street. Mitchell Street is a major road—a major collector—so it has a greater amount of traffic. In comparison to similar residential roads of the same cross-section, Packard Street does carry more traffic than the average suburban collector road. That is obviously because we have a defence base at the end of it.

**TEMPORARY CHAIR**—You have introduced a lower speed limit. Were any other ideas considered, such as speed humps, to cut down the speeding, or is that something that you do not encourage in the Northern Territory?

**Mr Pudney**—We have a number of local area traffic management devices throughout Darwin, and we have an ongoing program shared with the Northern Territory government. Packard Street may be one that goes onto the council's program in the future if we feel that we cannot manage by just putting signs up or dealing with the local community.

**Mr HOLLIS**—I am not an expert on streets in Darwin, but it surprises me that speed is an issue in that street. When I went down there this morning, it seemed to me only a very short street, and it has a base at the end where most people have to stop. So if they were speeding going towards the base, it would only be for a short while because there is a checkpoint at the gate where they have to stop and check. Or is it speeding the other way: leaving the base in a hurry?

**Mr Pudney**—Our traffic counts indicate that what we call the 85th percentile is around 65 kilometres per hour. It is within two kilometres per hour difference either way—whether you are coming to or from the base. If you are measuring half way along Packard Street, between Mitchell Street and the base, you are getting about the same speeds. There is enough length in that street to get up to quite fast speeds. As I said, the 85th percentile is around 65 kilometres per hour; that means 15 per cent of the traffic is doing over 65 kilometres per hour. It is that particular percentage that is of concern to the residents.

**Mr LINDSAY**—I am going to start with a prickly question, if that is okay. Submissions were called by advertisement in the *NT News* for this public inquiry on 29 May. I read your council's letter to this committee when you sat down to give evidence. Is that an indication as to the priority that you see about how the council should view this project? You are not really concerned about it?

**Mr Pudney**—I am here today representing the council, but I cannot speak for the council as a whole. Council had a process in order for us to make a submission. We put a report to council asking whether they did want to raise any issues today or not.

**Mr LINDSAY**—How often does your council meet?

**Mr Pudney**—The council meets once a month.

**Mr LINDSAY**—So you had your meeting on 29 June? You had to wait until then?

**Mr Pudney**—That is correct.

**Mr LINDSAY**—I understand that process. Moving on to the point on weapons movement, you have been here today and heard the evidence about the ammunition that has to be transported to the naval base. You have heard that it cannot explode and that the safety is not really in question. Do you accept that evidence from the Navy today and therefore discount this point that you make to the committee?

**Mr Pudney**—Personally, I can understand it. As I said, I cannot speak for council.

**Mr LINDSAY**—Would you recommend to the council that it is not an issue, having heard the evidence today?

**Senator MURPHY**—I just want to ask a question with regard to this. It is this question of consultation. I would have thought the council would have had some consultation prior to its 29 June meeting with the Department of Defence with regard to these issues. Can you inform us as to whether or not the council has had meetings with the defence people and, if so, when? What issues were covered?

**Mr Pudney**—In terms of the dates, I could not answer that. There have been at least two representations to council, and I have not been personally involved in those. The chief executive officer has been involved. Our consultation has been through local ward aldermen. They are discussing the issues with the local residents. In particular, you will hear later from—

**Senator MURPHY**—My question is about the council having had a discussion with Defence—that is, a representation from the Department of Defence to the council with regard to the proposed development that relates to the issues such as the question Mr Lindsay has asked you about. If you do not know the answer, can you take the question on notice and provide the committee with some information?

**Mr Pudney**—As I said, there have been two representations. I would have to take on notice the details of those.

**Mr LINDSAY**—Are you prepared to go back to your council, having heard the evidence today in relation to the ammunition question, to recommend to your council that it is not an issue? Are you prepared to do that?

**Mr Pudney**—I am prepared to recommend that it is not a major issue.

**Mr LINDSAY**—In relation to a point that you raised about the naval base being a significant military target—and I certainly raised that in the private briefings this morning—do you understand that moving the Darwin Naval Base somewhere else, as you have heard earlier today, might cost \$50 million and that moving Larrakeyah Barracks, which also would be a significant military target, could cost extra dollars? Is it your council's view that the Commonwealth of Australia and the Public Works Committee should recommend, rather than spending \$12 million on Darwin Naval Base, spending perhaps \$75 million to relocate those facilities?

**Mr Pudney**—I think council in this case is merely asking that the committee take into account not just economic issues but the issues of the community and the effect on the civilian population. It is hard to put a dollar figure on that but, obviously, if there was not much in the two decisions, then perhaps that could sway it. If it is a substantial amount of money, then I am sure council would understand the position.

**Mr LINDSAY**—In relation to noise, you say that council seeks controls to minimise these effects. What kind of controls are you seeking? Are you suggesting that the Public Works Committee should put controls on or that the council should have the ability to put controls on?

**Mr Pudney**—In regard to the construction activity, we would expect that, within the tender documents, there would be some specifications that would limit and reduce the impact on local residents.

**Mr LINDSAY**—Under 'Dust and Other Effects', you are saying:

Council seeks consultation in regard to wide or heavy vehicular movements . . .

How do you see that process happening? What kind of consultation do you want?

**Mr Pudney**—Again, I believe that there should be a requirement in the tender documents for the construction company to seek council approval where they are moving loads through local roads. It is no more than the current requirement under the by-laws.

**Mr LINDSAY**—At the last point, you say that you expect:

. . . that all loads will be secured and adequately dust suppressed.

I do not know the laws of the Northern Territory. In Queensland, councils can regulate that. Are you saying that you have no power to regulate loads being secured and adequately dust suppressed?

**Mr Pudney**—There are laws within the Territory in terms of securing fines on people but, again, to ensure that we do not need to have inspectors chasing cars or police chasing trucks, we would seek that that issue be identified in the tender specifications.

**Mr RIPOLL**—I have just one further question. On this question of the local impact on residents, what evidence has the council got that there actually is a local impact in terms of residents in that area? What has actually come out? What process have you gone through to determine that?

**Mr Pudney**—That is a result of the comments to local members talking to their constituents. In terms of noise, we do not have any measurements. It is anecdotal evidence from residents.

**Senator MURPHY**—Can I go back to the question of consultation with the council. I would have thought that Defence would have written to council at some point in time when they had made a decision to proceed with an upgrade of the naval base in Darwin. Are you aware of that? Was there any correspondence that the council received?

**Mr Pudney**—I am not aware of any written correspondence, but please let me take that on notice.

**Senator MURPHY**—Could you take that on notice and advise the committee of when Defence advised the council of the proposed development and whether or not that correspondence was included on the council agenda.

**TEMPORARY CHAIR**—As there are no further questions, I thank you, Mr Pudney, for that evidence. We will now take a short break.

**Proceedings suspended from 2.53 p.m. to 3.10 p.m.**



**FRASER, Alderman Ian, Darwin City Council**

**TEMPORARY CHAIR**—Welcome. The committee has received your submission dated 25 June 1999. Do you wish to propose any amendments to that submission?

**Alderman Fraser**—No.

**TEMPORARY CHAIR**—It is proposed that the submission be received, taken as read and incorporated in the transcript of evidence. Do members have any objections? There being no objection, it is so ordered.

*The document read as follows—*

**TEMPORARY CHAIR**—Alderman Fraser, I now invite you to make a short statement in support of your submission and to make yourself available for questions.

**Alderman Fraser**—In opening, I would like to address some comments that were made in earlier evidence to the committee. In respect of the Darwin City Council's knowledge of the project, my understanding is that—and certainly as an Alderman—we became aware of it on or around 14 May, as I pointed out in my letter. I am the Chairman of the Corporate Services Committee of the Darwin City Council. It is my committee's responsibility to respond to any intergovernmental correspondence. The first I became aware of this correspondence was when I, as an individual, received a submission from the Department of Defence. I made inquiries at the Darwin City Council to ensure that the proposal was presented and, indeed, it was presented to my committee—that is, the Corporate Services Committee—before it was referred to the full council on 28 June, as has been stated. I would like to come back to that issue.

In respect of the consultation by Lands, Planning and Environment, I would like to put it on the record that the level of consultation by that department with residents of this city and with the Darwin City Council is not up to best standard. There has been no contact between that department and me, as representative of that area, and I am not aware of any consultation between that department and residents of Packard Street. So I am a bit bemused at the representatives of that department coming along to this committee and saying that they consult regularly with residents. To give you an example, there is currently a land use objective for the southern suburbs of Darwin—which are the suburbs further on from that area. There is supposed to be a reference committee that was put together of people by Lands, Planning and Environment which includes council representatives. That committee has not formally met for 18 months. So any consultation process by Lands, Planning and Environment on behalf of the Darwin City Council and the residents I would question.

In respect of the ammunition, I have a little bit of experience in the transport of ammunition. I was a logistics officer in the Royal Australian Air Force, and I was responsible for the Frances Bay bomb dump. It is my understanding that, when I was in the Royal Australian Air Force, the group of people I had the most trouble with in the inappropriate mixing of ammunition was the people on the patrol boats. Quite frequently, I would have to call the people back to the base to segregate the explosives—that is, they had inappropriate explosives loaded on a pallet and coming back to the storage area, where they breached NATO guidelines. So I do not share the same confidence of Captain Overton. I would hope that, since I have got out of the industry, the practice has improved. There was an inappropriate mixture of classes of ammunition, and we are talking about highly explosive ammunition. So they are the only points I would like to make to the committee.

**TEMPORARY CHAIR**—In your letter, I note that you say that nowhere in the statements is there any discussion of the impact on local residents. Would you care to tell us, in your opinion, in what ways the presence of the base has impacted on residents in the past and whether you believe the impact will increase or decrease as a result of this new development.

**Alderman Fraser**—Certainly. You would be aware that in 1942 the base was bombed and there was significant collateral damage to the residences around the base. When we are

talking about places in Darwin, we are not talking about if or why, but has. The base was bombed during 1942 and there was significant collateral damage to civilian buildings in that area. In respect of the history of the Larrakeyah Army Base, as I said, I have been in Darwin since 1981 when I was in the Royal Australian Air Force, and the Larrakeyah Army Base at that stage housed the 7th Military District. Since then, it has expanded to incorporate the surveillance unit known as NORFORCE, the Darwin Naval Base and the Headquarters Northern Command. So, since I first came here in 1981, the base has gone from 137 army personnel to quite substantial numbers of people living on it because there have been major redevelopments of the married quarters on the base.

As pointed out by residents of Packard Street—and I would like to draw your attention to the fact that there are a significant number of residents of Packard Street in attendance at the committee hearing today—for defence people the road is an access road from Mitchell Street to Larrakeyah, but for the residents of Packard Street it is where they live. So it is not just a service road; it is where they actually live.

Since 1980, we have had a significant development of defence assets at the base, including the three units that I talked about—the Darwin Naval Base with its accompanying patrol boats, the NORFORCE surveillance unit and Headquarters Northern Command—which are 24-hour a day, 7-day a week units. So we have gone from a very low key Army presence there for most of the sixties and seventies to three high profile maximum operational units located at the end of Packard Street. The significant impact on the residents of Packard Street is quite substantial. If you take into account the tropical lifestyle that we live in and the age of the buildings in Packard Street, it is quite noticeable. I have been in many of the residents' homes while the traffic is going up and down Packard Street, and you cannot carry out a conversation or have a telephone conversation because of the traffic noise emanating from Packard Street.

**Mr HOLLIS**—Why would that be?

**Alderman Fraser**—With the redevelopment of the street—and I am not familiar with the history—it seems to me that the homes on Packard Street are somewhat closer to Packard Street than they are in other parts of Larrakeyah and older Darwin. Certainly, my house in Parap is located a lot further away from the street than the houses in Packard Street are. Also, because of our lifestyle, they are all elevated. The majority of the homes in Packard Street are elevated and, of course, we use louvres and other cooling devices, so they are open to the outside environment.

**Mr HOLLIS**—I must say that I have often been on this committee and the argument has been put to me about aircraft noise. Indeed, at hearings I have had in Darwin before at Coonawarra here, people have put to me that the noise from aircraft affects their housing. But, in my 12 years on this committee, this is the first time that anyone has ever put to me, anywhere in Australia, that they cannot conduct telephone conversations or an adequate conversation because of the noise on the road.

**Interjector**—It is true.

**Mr HOLLIS**—It may be true, but I am just saying that it is a first for me in 12 years. I would not mind testing this out sometime and making a telephone call in Packard Street when vehicles are passing by and seeing if it is true or not.

**Alderman Fraser**—I did a TV interview there last week for this hearing, and it was impossible for the TV crew to make sound recordings. Unfortunately, a gentleman met an untimely end at the end of Packard Street recently and the TV crew was telling me that there has been an ongoing police investigation and they have had lots of trouble recording the sound. It is quite extensive.

We are talking about the relocation, and I would like to go back because one of the points that I made in my submission was about the lack of consultation. I first became aware of the noise issues in November last year when I visited the street and the residents raised it with me. As I said in my report, we then arranged to meet the commander of Northern Command to talk to him about those concerns. I must say, and again I put on the record, that I was very dismayed that while we were there we were told about the relocation of the transport unit but we were not told about the development of the naval base. I think that when the Lord Mayor and I went to see the commander that that information could have been given to us. I do not think it was that sensitive at that time when we were trying to allay the interface between it.

In respect of transport up and down the street, you have to understand that the impact of NORFORCE is quite substantial. They use Unimog trucks and do a lot of training because they go to quite remote areas of Australia. They actually go up and down the street quite frequently with empty trailers, so you quite often get a truck in low gear that is not a heavy truck going up and down the street—and they will still be there after the relocation of the transport unit. The training obviously takes place on weekends and at night, so the impact of these Unimogs and their trailers is quite substantial.

**Mr HOLLIS**—It is through NORFORCE that there are all those trucks. We might get a breakdown of how much traffic there is. I went down that street this morning—how old do you think those houses there would be?

**Alderman Fraser**- My understanding is that they were built around and certainly rebuilt at the completion of the Second World War. There is a house that is currently being redeveloped and that was built—

**Mr HOLLIS**—Larrakeyah was already there, wasn't it?

**Alderman Fraser**—It was, but you have to understand that Darwin at the end of the Second World War was a very small town of some five to six thousand people. The Army base was built well away from the built-up area—as was the Air Force base—on the verge of the town. Larrakeyah has been built around the Army base since the Second World War.

**Mr HOLLIS**—Yes, but it was built there in the knowledge that the Army base was there. It is like that big development at Cullen Bay. People might be complaining there, but that was built when people knew that an Army base was above it.

**Alderman Fraser**—That is quite correct, but you must understand that for many decades the Army involvement in the Northern Territory was at a very low level. I believe that in the early eighties there were about 137 full-time Army personnel; there are not 137 now.

**Mr RIPOLL**—Do you know specific times or days or how often the level of noise reaches the level you are talking about where you cannot have a conversation?

**Alderman Fraser**—When I visited that street as a part-time alderman, it was in the afternoon and the traffic was sustained. It is very sustained from 6 o'clock in the morning because of the requirement for ADF people to exercise. People start arriving early because they have to do exercises. It is quite sustained from about six o'clock in the morning through to six or seven at night.

**Mr RIPOLL**—What sort of traffic is that when people are arriving? Are they arriving in private vehicles?

**Alderman Fraser**—It starts with private vehicles and contractors and then defence vehicles.

**Mr RIPOLL**—To get noise levels that are so high that you cannot have an audible conversation on the phone—I am assuming inside the house—you would not be talking about private vehicles, you would have to be talking about trucks or something a bit larger.

**Alderman Fraser**—The noise of motorbikes is unbelievable. It is the worst street for noise that I have experienced in my ward, which covers a quarter of Darwin. I was not in the home during the phone conversation that I had; a constituent actually rang me up and I could not hear her because I could hear the traffic noise over the phone and I was in my office in Wood Street.

**Mr RIPOLL**—How well known is that problem in the suburb of Larrakeyah?

**Alderman Fraser**—When I doorknocked the street, the response rate from the people was 100 per cent. Council did its follow-up surveys, and we would not have reduced the speed limit for the street to 40 kilometres per hour without the support of the residents. It is quite well known.

**Mr RIPOLL**—In your opinion, how do the house prices on that street compare on average to those on any other street? Is there a marked difference? If what you say is correct and you were trying to sell a house there, you would not be able to sell it. What are the differences?

**Alderman Fraser**—I am not competent to quote whether the price value of Packard Street is any lower, because it is such a high profile and beautiful area to live in. Residents have spoken to me about what they believe is their loss of amenity and loss of prices, but I could not tell you whether that is sustained by commercial rates.

**TEMPORARY CHAIR**—We seem to be talking about road noise and traffic. What do you think should be done about it?

**Alderman Fraser**—As I said in my report, we have already had the arrival of the Sea Cat. That was not mentioned in the report. That split Navy operations. The people at Packard Street in Larrakeyah, me included, welcome the defence build-up. I am here because of the defence build-up. My family lives here because we were moved up here as part of the defence build-up. I believe that, as an elected member, we have to look at the best value for money. I believe spending another \$12.7 million on this facility needs to be seriously questioned. The question has been put, and I expected that you would say to me, ‘It could cost \$50 million.’ The Northern Territory is littered with defence facilities that were built for some reason and were walked away from. We have East Arm, which was built where there were gun emplacements. It is now part of a council park. I was on the RAAF base in 1981 when they were going to spend \$140 million expanding the base. They stopped that overnight and redeveloped Tindal.

There are quite significant examples in the Northern Territory of where defence money is spent and projects are stopped and relocated. You have brought it up this morning. If you have a look at the diagrams, the place is chock-a-block with boats. It is time for them to reconsider moving to a suitable location. Apart from here, Western Australia and Sydney, the Navy does not have the sort of concentration of combat bases. It is just not best practice. You just have to look at what happened in Kosovo. It is not best practice to have a combat base in a residential area. It should be located outside a residential area.

**TEMPORARY CHAIR**—We would probably have to move all those ships out of Garden Island, Cockatoo Island and everywhere else, if we took that view.

**Mr RIPOLL**—Just on that noise issue again, has the council done any specific noise level studies or monitoring of either the level of noise or the frequency of noise in that street?

**Alderman Fraser**—No. The initial plan was to reduce the volume of traffic by the 40 kilometres, and that has been backed up also by the recommendation that the Northern Territory police visit the street regularly with speed guns. If that trial, which has only recently been put in place, does not solve the issue, then I think we will have to readdress it. As you said, traffic calming devices add to noise rather than subtract from it. We were hoping that the 40 kilometre an hour zone and the reduced activity on the base would make it quieter. I think part of the problem, before the 40 kilometre an hour zone came into place, was that the younger members of the Defence Force were leaving the base—which is the same as this base; this base is a 40 kilometre an hour zone, the same as Larrakeyah—and going to a 60 kilometre an hour zone. It was a bit like getting out of the gate. The reason why we matched the zone on the street with the base zone is so it would be a bit quieter. Also, we were given assurances by the then senior commander of the ADF that his staff would be made aware of the problems of the noise in the street.

**Mr RIPOLL**—Has the council also approached the base itself to try to determine how they could reduce those noise levels and to determine the times and frequencies, particularly what days and things like that?

**Alderman Fraser**—We met with the then commander of Northern Command on 11 December to discuss those issues. Some of the issues have been resolved. For example, one

of the problems that Packard Street people faced—and the Department of Defence has attempted to do this—was that there were armoured personnel carriers leaving Robertson Barracks, being spread out so they were not a traffic hazard, arriving in Packard Street and sitting there with their high performance diesel and petrol engines purring over until the other group arrived. Then, like something out of the Wild West, they would all fire out their engines and move onto the base in convoy. That activity has certainly been stopped. That was one activity that was happening quite often with high performance military vehicles. I believe the pulling down and erecting of camps on the weekend has been stopped. That was occurring where they had major exercises and would set up and pull down camps on the weekend. Residents were getting the heavy vehicles going through. In fairness to the ADF, I think that they have come some way in trying to mitigate the impacts of their operations on the citizens of Packard Street.

**Senator MURPHY**—In terms of ascertaining the problem times and the types of vehicles that cause the problem, why wouldn't the council seek to sit down with Defence—given Defence's ongoing strategy of redeploying a lot of aspects of the overall defence operations out to Robertson and various other areas—to try to address this question with them fairly comprehensively?

**Alderman Fraser**—I think that is a good question, and I believe that we are some way down that line. We are—as the Acting Director of Technical Services gave evidence—halfway through a trial. At the completion of that trial, I think we will have further discussions. Quite frankly, this committee has resulted in more communications and discussions, and I think that in the future we will have more discussions about the type and number of vehicles. I would just say that, yes, I will take that on board and raise it at the technical services subcommittee of council, which is meeting in two weeks time.

**Senator MURPHY**—It seemed to me that that would be a useful exercise for the council because Defence is changing the nature of its operation at Larrakeyah, and that might also help the residents to be fairly well informed with regard to the noise. I do not think there is any reasonable expectation that you are going to solve the noise problem entirely and, of course, you may never solve it to the satisfaction of everybody. Providing that you get noise levels that are similar to those expected in other areas that are long roadways subject to heavy traffic, and taking account of the fact that the base has been there a long time, I would have thought that it is something that the council and Defence ought to have been able to resolve.

**Alderman Fraser**—People are basically saying that they are very supportive of the operations of the ADF, and the people are here to look after our security first and foremost and the security of Australia secondly. We are well aware of that. However, I think it has reached a level where people are crying for help and, as I said, I myself became aware of the problem only in late 1998. It is only when you go to another street, like Larrakeyah Terrace or the streets just one street away, that you notice the difference from Packard Street. What we are saying is in response to the presentation that was given. I fell off the lounge when I read in the second paragraph on page 75 of the submission—there were two in there; this is the second one—that there was no recognition of the suburb. They are talking about Palmerston. Now that the process has been recognised, as a result of your

committee and your visit, the communication will be a lot better in relation to what is happening at Larrakeyah with the residents.

**Mr RIPOLL**—In paragraph 12, you said that the \$12.7 million appears to fully occupy the site and also that any further expense of naval activities, especially in times of heightened defence activity, will need to be accommodated elsewhere in Darwin Harbour, which means that the cost effectiveness of the current proposal needs to be questioned. How do you get to that conclusion regarding the cost effectiveness of this proposal?

**Alderman Fraser**—The same way you did: I looked at the diagram in the report. It is chockers with vessels and the Navy's own activity. They have just commissioned a new vessel, which has come to Darwin. It cannot be located at the facility; it has to be located at another facility. As the commander of the Navy said, any time another vessel comes in, they have to relocate that vessel. So it has not even lasted the length of this report. They have commissioned another vessel and brought it up here for two years, and they have to split their operations straightaway. I would have thought that it would be cost effective to co-locate all your activities, not have them spread out over the harbour. The Sea Cat is a perfect example of what has occurred.

**Mr HOLLIS**—Mind you, it could be argued—if one wanted to argue that way—that that base was established for the Fremantles and that it has filled that role. You could argue that the very fact the *Coonawarra* is here is part of the naval establishment as well. You could argue, as you are arguing, that everything could be combined at this end—that berths for visiting vessels plus frigates that might come up plus the catamaran, if it is kept after the two years, plus the naval patrol boats plus the barges—and that everything could be located in one area. You could also argue that, as the Navy base there, it has fulfilled the purpose that it was designed for.

**Alderman Fraser**—I think that is absolutely correct. If you look at the facilities that the Navy experienced before that facility was built, they were certainly of a relevant standard, but we did not have a \$100 million wharf project back when that facility was built; it was not planned for that facility to be built. We now have a purpose-built commercial area out there where only activities in respect of that wharf are allowed to be located at Hudsons Creek and the wharf. Time has moved on, and what I am asking as a taxpayer is whether we should spend another \$12 million. If we spend another \$12 million—and I think that has been brought up by someone on the committee—it will make it harder to move because the next time you get a report in front of you, it will not be the amount of money now, it will be the \$12 million on top of that so we would not be talking about \$50 million; we would be talking about \$65 million.

You got a report today from defence witnesses that there is an expectation that there would be further works when they get new patrol boats. I found it a little astounding, as a taxpayer, that they would actually want to buy a patrol boat that fits into a berth rather than buy the best patrol boat and have it ported somewhere. I find it a little astounding that they say, 'We can only buy patrol boats now that can fit into the Darwin Naval Base.' I would have thought it would have been the other way around: that you buy the best patrol boats.



**Mr HOLLIS**—I do not think anyone actually said that. We can ask the defence witnesses when they come back, but I think they said that if the Fremantle class has to be replaced—the current expectation is in the year 2008 or 2010; and, defence being defence, that will probably be extended to about 2015—and, if it were replaced with something larger, they might have to extend the wharf to take in that. But we are now speculating on what might happen in 10 or 20 years time.

**Alderman Fraser**—What I can speculate on is that the planning pressure and the development in the CBD at Darwin is quite sustainable. Yesterday I attended a planning subcommittee of the Darwin City Council where the majority of the items on the agenda fell within the electorate of Port Darwin, which is in the CBD. There is already a development proposal for another four blocks of units to be built on Packard Street, so there is going to be increased residential development in and around that area. I go back to the question: in 1999, is it best practice to locate a combat base in a residential suburb near the CBD?

**Mr HOLLIS**—One would hope that, if they are going to build four more units in Packard Street, they would move them back slightly—you did say they were unnecessarily close to the road. One would hope that the architect or the approving authority this time insists that they are moved back slightly from the road.

**Alderman Fraser**—That is correct. My understanding is that those units will not exit onto Packard Street but will exit onto another street, which will mean a bit of a reduction in traffic there.

**Mr LINDSAY**—Alderman Fraser, I am aware that there are a number of residents here. During the evidence that we heard before your evidence, what were the residents talking to you about? What sorts of things did they say? Did they say, ‘No, I do not agree with that’ or ‘I did not realise that, perhaps it is not as bad as we thought’? Can you give me a view of how the residents have found the inquiry this afternoon.

**Alderman Fraser**—They are very happy that the inquiry has covered most of the concerns that I raised in my submission to the inquiry, which are a reflection of the residents’ concerns. Whilst I wrote the submission and submitted it, the concerns in it are based on the feedback I got from residents. First and foremost, the residents of Packard Street—and Larrakeyah—are very proactive in the support of our defence forces. I would like to put that on record. They want to live in cohabitation with the Defence Force at Larrakeyah, but the problem is that the people who buy homes there buy them for 10 or 15 years, whereas the people who come onto Larrakeyah may only be there for two, three, four or five years.

Packard Street is not a transit street for its residents, it is where they live. I think they want to work forward, and I stressed to the Commander when I met him on 11 December last year that he should have public meetings. I am pleased to note that the representatives of the Phillips group—they met me in May, which was when I first became aware of this—said they had come there because of my input and what their feedback was to the CEO.

My understanding was that they came to the CEO and the CEO said, ‘You should go and talk to the local alderman.’ When they came to me, I briefed them on the issues of Packard

Street and what we were trying to put in there. It is to do with noise; it is to do with speed. When will the Department of Defence stop developing the Larrakeyah peninsula? I suppose that is the question that they are asking. Is there a time line when they can stop putting stuff on to this little peninsula at the end of Packard Street?

**Mr LINDSAY**—I think the evidence has shown today that there will not be any further development of the naval base, but I do not know about the Army side of things. Were the residents aware of what you just told the committee a minute ago about this planning committee meeting about four blocks of units in Packard Street? Are the residents aware of that?

**Alderman Fraser**—We have a very unique and quaint way of allowing people to know what is going on. I do not want to bore the committee with the planning processes and the lack of them in the Northern Territory. However, it is done by a pink sign. There is a pink sign put up, so they were aware of the development in Packard Street.

**Mr LINDSAY**—How many people would be involved in that development, by the way? What is the density of those developments?

**Alderman Fraser**—I believe it is four units.

**Mr LINDSAY**—In relation to the explosive ordnance, the evidence that you gave at the start was about your experience when you were in the RAAF. Do you agree that, back at that time, the Navy had no technical expertise in relation to how to handle ammunition, that they now do and that they now handle ammunition properly and the kinds of issues that you raised no longer occur?

**Alderman Fraser**—Unless something has changed. If it is the same NATO principles that were involved when I was in there—I am not privy with what may have happened over the last five to 10 years since I exited the military—the training that the Navy people received back in 1981 was the same training I received. It was the same Fremantle class patrol boats that are now there, so I would hope that it would be there. I was just interested that they stressed that the ordnance is not dangerous. When I went and did my training, I was told that all ordnance is always dangerous. Certainly, in my 20 years in the military, it was always stressed that you always treated all ordnance with a great deal of respect. I was just interested in the comment that they take the ordnance through the streets, take it down and put it on a landing craft, then take it out and load it on the boat. I would ask: if it is that safe, why don't they load it alongside the wharf?

**Mr LINDSAY**—I have to say that I picked that up too. Defence tells us that, for any of the ammunition to explode, it has to be functioned by a weapon, and the mere transporting of it down a street is totally safe. Do you accept that?

**Alderman Fraser**—No, I do not. My understanding is—and, again, I would have to say it is a layman's understanding—that the ordnance stores that a patrol boat carries are small arms ammunition and ammunition for the Bofors 40-millimetre gun. They do have 81-millimetre mortars. They have flares. They have pyrotechnics. I would like to know—and you could ask them—whether they carry small arms ammunition such as grenades and

detonators. If that is all on the one truck coming in, I have seen enough pictures of what ammunition can do to be worried, especially if it were involved in the right sort of thing.

**Mr LINDSAY**—Aren't you aware of the nuclear weapons they carry as well! In point 13, you talk about this ordnance and you say:

. . . in particular as it is transported past a Primary School.

When I read that, having done a number of these sorts of inquiries, I read that as emotive type language and not really relevant. Would you see how I see that? Do you have a response to that?

**Alderman Fraser**—I am not responsible for putting the primary school there. The ordnance is transported past the primary school. I think children and ordnance should not mix, even if it is just going past. When I spoke to the principal of the school and the chairman of the school council, no-one had told them. Generally, it has been a well-kept secret in town that the ordnance does go down there. I do not think any of the residents, the school or anyone knew that ordnance was going past in the quantities that it is, even though it is, as you pointed out, mainly contained within shells and stuff like that.

**Mr RIPOLL**—Can I just follow up on that question. This is a question that I wanted to ask earlier. The primary school would have had to have Northern Territory government and Darwin City Council approval to be built in the first place, and surely that would have come up as an issue at that time. You are telling us today that nobody knew about it. You also say in here that it is the only road in and out, so how else were they going to get it in? You cannot have it both ways. If there is a school there and there are residents there, there must have always been the knowledge that—and you just said this before—there would be at least some ordnance. Surely in the approval for the building of a primary school safety concerns must have come up at that stage.

**Alderman Fraser**—The Larrakeyah primary school was built when the Northern Territory was under the responsibility of the Commonwealth of Australia. I think quite a lot of things happened under the responsibility of the Commonwealth of Australia which would not have been allowed to happen in other jurisdictions. As I said, when the Larrakeyah primary school was built, the Army base was at a very low level of maintenance. They used to come out and pick their ammunition up at a place called Bayview Haven and, after that, they would pick their ammunition up at the Frances Bay bomb dump. So there was very little ammunition transported on and off the base. If the troops needed to pick their ammunition up, they would have picked it up at the bomb dumps outside the base and proceeded to where they needed it.

**Mr RIPOLL**—Via the road?

**Alderman Fraser**—No, they would not have had ammunition on the Larrakeyah army base. They would have picked it up at the bomb dumps which were located at Frances Bay. So they would not have gone back on—

**Mr RIPOLL**—So they would have come by sea.

**Alderman Fraser**—They would have transported out of the base, picked up their ammunition at an ammunition depot and then gone out to their firing ranges out in the bush. It has only been, I think, since the Navy has been there that ammunition has been transported on the base. But the primary school was built and the road was built when the Territory was controlled by the Commonwealth, and the Darwin City Council would not have had any say in it, and there was no NT government at that stage.

**Mr RIPOLL**—They would have had a say in the construction—the approval or licensing—of a building?

**Alderman Fraser**—No. The Darwin City Council has no control over building in this jurisdiction.

**Mr LINDSAY**—In fairness to Mr Pudney, who gave evidence earlier on behalf of the council, let me fire the same prickly question to you. You have complicated it by saying that you knew about this on 19 May—and that is in your evidence—and that you run the committee that is responsible for this. I found myself thinking that—and another member of the committee said this to me in the break—if this is so much of an issue with the Darwin City Council, why wasn't the CEO or the mayor here? Why did we get this at the last minute from the council? Why didn't you push this through your council to get a reasonable submission to the committee in a better time line?

**Alderman Fraser**—That is a very fair question. Let me tell you that there is a simple answer. I received this submission on 7 June, and I believe the council received it around the same time. During the month of June, the council was heavily involved in the preparation and planning of its 1999-2000 budget and the setting of rates and, as you would know as politicians, everything else is far from our minds in the angst of doing that. So quite a few of the meetings—and we are all part-time aldermen—that occurred during that particular time were in respect of the setting of the 1999-2000 budget. As soon as I found out that the report had hit the council, I then got it to go to the appropriate committee. Unfortunately, the two committees that would consider this report—which are the technical services committee and the corporate services committee—both meet a week before the council meeting. So the earliest the council could have considered it at a committee stage was a week before we did consider it. And then we did it.

At the moment, the Darwin City Council is hosting a major international sister cities conference—and you asked me whether some people from your council were there. Apart from the Australian sister cities conference and all the delegates, the Lord Mayor is hosting the Mayor of Anchorage—which is the sister city of Darwin—who is in town as part of that conference. The CEO, the Lord Mayor and other senior council officials are naturally engaged in supporting that major council initiative, and that is why they are not here today.

**Mr LINDSAY**—Finally, you mentioned earlier in your evidence that you are a taxpayer, and we love you for that. I asked an earlier witness, 'Do you support the spending of \$12.4 million on the Darwin Naval Base or \$75 million, or whatever it is, to move the whole complex?' You have gone through your budget process and we have gone through ours. I think sometimes our money is tighter than yours. We have not raised our rates for four years now.

**Alderman Fraser**—Is that right? That is not what I hear.

**Mr LINDSAY**—There have been no tax increases for four years. What do you think about that issue that the committee now has to wrestle with? Do we recommend to the government, ‘Look, don’t do this. Spend \$75 million or \$100 million somewhere else.’ What is your response to that?

**Alderman Fraser**—As I said, we are all custodians of public money, and the only difference with you gentlemen is that the noughts change. The fact of the matter is that I think an additional \$12.4 million spent on the facility needs to be seriously questioned in the sense of whether it is going to be the best investment over the longer period. Quite clearly, according to the annexes that support the document, the facility must be reaching the limit of what you can do there. I think that the arrival of Sea Cat has shown that there is a need to concentrate naval activities in the Port of Darwin. I believe the most appropriate location for that is in the new port. Even if you go through the process of questioning the defence department about it and make them do their numbers one more time, you have achieved your goal and I have achieved my goal—and that is the most appropriate expenditure of public moneys.

As I said, all you have to do is to go out to East Point where, in 1943, they built huge turrets and stuck guns in them that never fired a shot, or go up and down the Stuart Highway where all the fighter bases and other facilities are. Quite clearly, things change. I do not think that anybody can predict what is going to happen in the next five years, let alone in the next 10 years, and what I am saying is that we should reconsider whether that is the optimal use of public money and whether a residential area near a CBD is the optimal location for that facility.

**Senator MURPHY**—When is the council’s next meeting?

**Alderman Fraser**—The council starts a series of meetings over the next fortnight. It is on the last Tuesday of the month.

**Senator MURPHY**—In light of the evidence that has been given here today and the information that you now have, is it possible to ask council if it might further consider the matters and inform this committee, as they see it, of any outstanding issues?

**Alderman Fraser**—Certainly, and I am sure the Acting Director of Technical Services will be reporting back to council. I will give you that undertaking, and I will make sure that we follow up the issues that you have raised.

**Senator MURPHY**—In addition to that, as part of that process if possible, would council be amenable to meeting with Defence and seeking to discuss with them the outstanding issues?

**Alderman Fraser**—I am sure council is quite happy to meet with the Department of Defence at any time.

**Senator MURPHY**—And it would be good if we could be informed likewise of the outcome of those discussions.

**Alderman Fraser**—The only right I would like—and I did stress it to the Phillips group representative when she met with me—is that I think the most important group of people that need to be included in the loop here are the residents of Packard Street. I am hoping that we could have a meeting with defence staff. There are facilities at Larrakeyah Primary School. The residents have asked me that, if they are having the naval base there, then why could we not meet at Larrakeyah? Why do we have to come all the way out to *Coonawarra*? That was a question that was asked of me today by someone ringing in. The representatives have all come here under their own steam. I did not ask them to come along. I have had phone calls from another four residents and the question was raised, ‘Why didn’t the committee meet at Larrakeyah?’

**Mr HOLLIS**—Perhaps they did not want to increase the traffic through Packard Street to hold the meeting there. It is not as if you had to go to Adelaide or somewhere. It is not all that far to come here.

**Alderman Fraser**—Probably transport out here from town is a bit limited.

**Senator MURPHY**—I assume the council is aware—either through you or somebody else—of the issues that are of concern to the residents. It would be very useful for this committee to have information before it of council’s appropriate consideration of the circumstances and of council’s discussions with Defence. I am not sure whether to include the residents in that. Whilst I appreciate the right or expectation of residents with regard to consultation, I am not sure if that would achieve a lot unless you have an appropriate explanation of the circumstances relating to the development—both the current, proposed and future—of Larrakeyah. Then I am sure the issue can be resolved.

**TEMPORARY CHAIR**—Thank you, Alderman Fraser.

[3.57 p.m.]

**PINK, Mr Robin Francis, General Manager, Darwin Ship Repair and Engineering Pty Ltd**

**TEMPORARY CHAIR**—Welcome. The committee has received a submission from Darwin Ship Repair and Engineering dated 25 June 1999. Do you wish to propose any amendment to that submission?

**Mr Pink**—No, I do not.

**TEMPORARY CHAIR**—It is proposed that the submission be received, taken as read and incorporated in the transcript of evidence. Do members have any objections? There being no objection, it is so ordered.

*The submission read as follows—*

**TEMPORARY CHAIR**—I now invite you to make a short statement in support of your submission and to answer questions.

**Mr Pink**—As I say in my letter to you, we welcome the planned increase of the surface vessels to be home ported in Darwin. Our concern was whether the development would increase the scope of maintenance currently being undertaken at the DNB. In Navy terms, the issue is whether the project might lead to an expansion of the maintenance level from intermediate level to depot level.

Our expression of support relies on the statement on page 3 that the Darwin Naval Base provides support functions identified as ‘intermediate maintenance facilities’ and the implication on page 12, paragraph 62, of the report that the DNB would remain an intermediate maintenance facility. DSRE is competent to provide both intermediate and depot level maintenance. We have recently gone through an upgrade, spending some \$12 million, so that we are able to offer all the physical facilities required to provide depot level maintenance to all conventional Navy ships likely to be home ported in Darwin.

**TEMPORARY CHAIR**—Did your company receive any guarantees from the Department of Defence that your company would be responsible for providing that depot level maintenance to all RAN ships home ported in Darwin?

**Mr Pink**—No, it did not.

**TEMPORARY CHAIR**—I note that you have performed work on overseas ships. Can you give us an example?

**Mr Pink**—We have recently done work on the Spruance class destroyers, which were in recently, for the American navy. We have a master ship repair agreement with the United States Navy for any of their vessels that come into Darwin, which means that they would contact PNR here who would contact us. They would say, ‘We have something wrong with our vessel, can you fix it?’ We would either look at fixing it or contacting somebody that could, so we act as an agent and carry out repairs that we can for the United States Navy.

**Mr LINDSAY**—Do you think this is a suitable project? Is this the way you would do it if you owned the Darwin Naval Base?

**Mr Pink**—No. I think that the Darwin Naval Base is probably a little small for what it is going to be. In view of the military build-up in this area, I do not think there is sufficient room in the port for all the vessels, particularly if we had a situation, say, to our north where we needed more vessels than patrol boats.

**Senator MURPHY**—Isn’t it the case though that, as outlined in Defence’s submission, you have the commercial facilities available for that? If there is a need, you have the East Arm facility and the Stokes Hill facility. In fact, there is a need now.

**Mr Pink**—Yes, they are berthing the Sea Cat at the wharf.



**Senator MURPHY**—Their submission also states that the Darwin Naval Base was never intended to facilitate large wartime vessels.

**Mr Pink**—I do not know what the intention was when it was built.

**Senator MURPHY**—No, that was in their submission to us in respect of the question that is being posed to you. That is why I would like to hear you address the question again: why would you do it differently?

**Mr Pink**—I think an awful lot of vessels are going to be tied up to the proposed wharf. We still have to move those vessels. They still have to be lifted out of the water, which is the whole idea of the extension. It is just my opinion that I do not think there is going to be much room in there.

**Mr LINDSAY**—I did not know who you were, and I do not know whether you have been here all afternoon, but did you hear the evidence about the Navy's intention in relation to maintenance? They, in fact, have no intention of changing the current arrangements: the maintenance that they outsource will continue to be outsourced. Do you accept that evidence?

**Mr Pink**—Yes, I do. I was not aware of that before this meeting.

**Senator MURPHY**—I want to go back to the question of service. You are a private company and you work on the Navy ships on a contract basis, don't you?

**Mr Pink**—Yes, we do.

**Senator MURPHY**—With regard to the work that they do, if it became a cost-positive exercise for Navy, why wouldn't they—and, indeed, if they did—decide to increase their capacity for maintenance on a cost-effective basis, and what impact would that have on a company like yours?

**Mr Pink**—This is one of the reasons why we say we welcome the increase in the surface ships being based in Darwin, because we would expect to tender for the increase of those vessels, and that would increase our throughput and the number of people we employ. We develop the yard looking towards the future for an increase in vessels up here.

**Senator MURPHY**—Do you have any long-term contracts?

**Mr Pink**—We only have one contract with Defence and that is for the maintenance of their synchrolift. All the work that we get, as far as the maintenance goes, is a work package, which is priced and reviewed by Defence, before we get awarded the package.

**Senator MURPHY**—With regard to the current operations of the synchrolift and the dry-docking of vessels, it has been put to us that it is both essential and the right thing to do when there is cyclonic weather about. Is that something that you would also agree with?

**Mr Pink**—Yes. We have a similar system to Defence, except that where their synchrolift has about a 725-tonne capacity, ours has 2,550 tonnes. We have hardstandings. We have a similar rail system to what Defence has, except ours is reinforced to carry the weight of the heavier vessels, and we have six of these heavy berths that we can use. We bring our own pearling fleet out when we need to during the cyclone season, and we have sufficient room for a further eight to 10 berths should we wish to expand that way.

**Senator MURPHY**—With the new vessels and the upgrade—and you may have put this in your submission—what does that mean for employment numbers? Would you employ more people as a result of that?

**Mr Pink**—Yes, with more vessels we would be employing more people.

**Senator MURPHY**—Do you have any idea of about how many more people you will employ?

**Mr Pink**—Not at this stage; not until we know what the extent of the work is.

**TEMPORARY CHAIR**—As there are no further questions, I thank you for appearing. I will now recall the officers from the Department of Defence.

[4.06 p.m.]

**DIETRICH, Commander Edwin Stewart David, Director, Maritime Support Development, Department of Defence**

**KEANE, Major Timothy Frances, Project Officer, Defence Estate Organisation, Department of Defence**

**KELLY, Brigadier Garry Ross, Director General Project Delivery, Defence Estate Organisation, Department of Defence**

**OVERTON, Captain William Robert, ADC, Royal Australian Navy, Commanding Officer, HMAS *Coonawarra***

**TEMPORARY CHAIR**—I now recall the officers from the Department of Defence. You have heard the evidence that has been given since you left the table, the questions that have been asked and the matters that have been raised. Would you care to comment on any of those particular items?

**Brig. Kelly**—There have been an awful lot of points covered, so it is somewhat difficult to address them all.

**Mr HOLLIS**—What you miss, we will ask in questions.

**Brig. Kelly**—I am sure you will. I will address them in turn and hit the key points. We welcome the general support of the Department of Lands, Planning and Environment. I note their concerns are mainly the same concerns as those raised later by the council and by Alderman Fraser, so I will come back to those later.

On the concerns about maximisation of business opportunities, I think we have indicated that the arrangements for depot level maintenance will remain as they are now, and so that also satisfies the concerns of Darwin Ship Repair and Engineering. In terms of ensuring that the local construction organisation has adequate opportunities, we will ensure that the packaging for the head contract package is appropriate for local industry and, in fact, we intend to use existing panels that were established for the APIN project and have also been used for some works at RAAF Base Darwin. For the more expensive marine based package, we intend to go to a two-stage process, which is the normal Defence business process, simply because we know the panels that were established did not take account of that sort of work. To ensure that we get best value for money for the Commonwealth, we feel obliged to go back to industry and seek registrations of interest. That does not mean that one of the companies on the panel or other local companies will not be invited to bid. It simply means that we are rechecking the market.

I would make the observation that the panels that we have established for the Northern Territory have worked very successfully since the beginning of the APIN project in about 1992. A couple of what I would call 'non-local companies' have succeeded in getting on to that panel at various times, but either have withdrawn through lack of interest when it came

to the tendering stage or have been relatively unsuccessful. There have been a couple of exceptions to that rule.

Some comment was made about relocation of the groyne. That was, in fact, the previous project that we looked at for some time about three or four years ago. The relocation of hydrographic ships to Darwin would have required the groyne to be relocated. That project, as I said, was about three or four years ago and, from our point of view, the redevelopment of Darwin Naval Base never really went away. So I am surprised to hear that people have only just heard about it or that it has come back in the last little while. Although we have only re-established liaison relatively recently, I think there was always an acceptance that Darwin Naval Base would need some sort of upgrade at some stage.

From the point of view of council, the same points were raised. One of the questions you asked was, 'Did council receive a written submission from us?' The answer to that is no. We did not write to council this year or as part of the build-up to this project and advise them of what was happening. With hindsight, that might have been a wise thing to do. Nevertheless, we did approach them face to face on at least three occasions, I think starting back in about March or April. That approach was generally to the chief executive officer. It started with our project people and included the Navy maritime development people. Then the third approach was from our project director, supported by our consultant who is looking at local issues. So we did not write, but we did have three face-to-face contacts.

A comment was made about traffic in peak hours. It seems to me that the submissions from council and, in particular, from Alderman Fraser concentrate on the noise of traffic. I cannot comment on some of the specifics that have been raised and would note that the comments are not related specifically to this project. It seems to be the existing conditions and perhaps a lack of concern on the part of some Defence people in the past that have created this situation. There are about 30 houses leading into the base, so there could be a view that there are 30 families in Packard Street. In fact, there are about 130 families in Packard Street; it is just that about 100 of those families live on the other side of the gate. I think most of the traffic that is generated from that base is probably domestic traffic from those 100 families.

If Defence were to move from Larrakeyah or from the Darwin Naval Base, it is highly likely that the Darwin Naval Base would become some sort of a marina development and that the developed part of Larrakeyah would become medium to high density development. So the traffic conditions and the noise conditions in the suburb would be unlikely to change from what they currently are. If the main reason proposed for us moving to East Arm is the noise, there is a logic disconnect there, because the noise resulting from the developments which would inevitably follow us moving would be similar.

We consider the 100 families inside the base to be part of the community. The most likely impact on those families would perhaps not be from the traffic but from things such as dust, noise or vibration from the actual construction activities because they are considerably closer. I suppose it is appropriate to say that we would be looking after our own to some extent to ensure that they do not create a problem. In any case, it is our normal business practice, as part of our tender processes as suggested by council or the Northern Territory Department of Lands, Planning and Environment, to ensure that the contractors tell us how

they would ameliorate those impacts, and we would use that as part of our assessment process. We then require contractors to develop an environmental management plan for construction, which would take into account those impacts.

I cannot comment on a lot of the specifics of the points raised by Alderman Fraser. I am surprised that the level of noise is as bad as claimed. I would simply say that I hope the movement of the Engineer Squadron would take away some of those heavier vehicles, which presumably are responsible for most of the noise. NORFORCE does have some lighter trucks—the Unimogs that were mentioned—and perhaps there are some measures that can be taken in relation to liaison with the local base and the local people to ensure that the impact of those sorts of vehicles is minimised.

The presence of the Army has increased in the 20 or so years that the Alderman talked about but has generally stabilised in recent years with the move of 7 Training Group out to Robertson, the impending move of the Engineer Support Squadron also out to Robertson and the replacement of 7th Military District with other organisations which eventually became Defence Corporate Support, which is actually now also based at Robertson. There have been a number of moves out, not necessarily in name, by the organisations involved. NORCOM has certainly moved in there but not with large numbers of people. Now that Navy has a greater interest in Larrakeyah and Army has a lesser interest, perhaps one of the steps that could be taken would be for local arrangements to be put in place to ensure that first priority for houses there for married people goes to Navy people. That would mean less commuter traffic in and out.

I think I have addressed the question of whether now is the time to move somewhere else. There was some discussion three or four years ago between Chief Minister Stone and the Minister for Defence. The Minister for Defence wrote back and said that we did not intend to establish at East Arm so, from my point of view, that is not a question today. It is a government decision that we will remain in the Larrakeyah Naval Base.

I cannot say what the future holds. The equation as to when Defence quits a base or relinquishes part of a base is a complex one and, particularly in recent years, we continually review our holdings. The Defence Efficiency Review required us to look very carefully at our Defence holdings and to rationalise where possible. We have a plan to reduce the value of Defence assets significantly—by 20 per cent or 30 per cent in the short term. That is because we have a lot of properties that can be rationalised. In the case of Larrakeyah, I cannot speak specifically other than to say that we see a long-term life for the Darwin Naval Base. We have a strategic plan for the Defence estate which the minister has not yet agreed to, so I cannot speak in any more detail than that, except to assure you that we would not be bringing this proposal to the committee if we thought we had a short-term future with the naval base.

Could I point out, from one of the comments that Alderman Fraser made, that if a lack of surety about Defence future planning is a big issue and one which might promote us to go out to East Arm so that we have maximum flexibility, surely there would be a strong case that we should leave any decision to relocate until about the time we make a decision to replace the patrol boats. We are taking into account future flexibility for those patrol boats. We are assuming that they will be about the same size; we are making sure that we can

accommodate boats that are about 13 metres longer. If it were a significant issue that we did not know what we were doing in the future and, therefore, we should plan for maximum flexibility, we would surely make the decision to move at about the time that we knew exactly what we would have in the future regarding the replacement of these patrol boats. As it is, we believe that the changes we are proposing to meet a government requirement to patrol the north of Australia are not so significant that they change the use of the base to such an extent that it should cause this committee to question whether we should remain there.

In conclusion, I will come back to a question that was raised previously by one of the members as to whether the Northern Territory government imposed additional regulations on the transport of ammunition or explosives. The answer to that is no. That just saves us coming back to you out of session.

**Capt. Overton**—I want to make a statement in terms of some of the evidence that has been given previously. One of the joys of being in the Defence Force in the Northern Territory is that, unlike many places in Australia where the Defence Force is tolerated, in the Northern Territory the Defence Force is welcomed. You can be assured that I and all my colleagues in Defence will do nothing to prejudice that welcome. So if we can do something to ameliorate the noise of the traffic that is coming down Packard Street, we will do it. I do not know that we can do much to ameliorate that noise, because there are other factors involved. There is a school down there; a lot of the traffic is related to the school. The brigadier made what I think was a very sensible suggestion about dedicated housing, and I will certainly take that one on board and take action on that. With regard to the ammunition, I can assure Alderman Fraser that we are currently operating under a much more regulated environment than that which he did—that is, the Navy is. We have qualified and licensed explosives custodians, and we do not mix the ammunition that is not permitted to be mixed.

**Mr HOLLIS**—There was one question not exactly related to this project. Someone said that there was a problem with the dredging. What is the problem with the dredging?

**Capt. Overton**—Dredging is not part of this project. The dredging is now occurring. It is a routine dredging of Darwin Naval Base.

**Mr HOLLIS**—So it is a noise problem or something?

**Capt. Overton**—As far as I am aware, the only problem has been outfall, which has been monitored by the NT government and found to be acceptable.

**Mr HOLLIS**—Brigadier Kelly, you mentioned NORFORCE, and I think Alderman Fraser mentioned it. What number of trucks would there be? Are there a lot of trucks?

**Brig. Kelly**—I cannot answer specifically. They would have a number of vehicles, not heavy vehicles but Unimog trucks—four to six tonners—and lighter vehicles. I cannot comment on some of the convoy processes that have been used, and I would not want to be dismissive of that, because the residents of the street clearly have legitimate complaints at times. I would suggest, though, that some of those matters are a matter for the local police.

**Mr HOLLIS**—I think, Captain Overton, you have answered my next question. I have here: is Alderman Fraser correct about ammunition transportation? You have said that there is not the mixture of ammunition.

**Capt. Overton**—We do not have any grenades or any munitions carried there. I think that I was perhaps misrepresented in some of the evidence. I said it was inherently safe, and I stand by that statement. What we do carry is inherently safe.

**Mr HOLLIS**—The crux of the point, and the point I agreed with Alderman Fraser on, is when he said about loading ordinance: if it is so safe, why not load it at the waterside instead of putting it on the barge, taking it out and loading it at sea?

**Capt. Overton**—There is a very simple rule. We comply with the NATO rules, and the NATO rules do not permit us to do that. We can pass it over a ship water gap only when the ship is at anchor.

**Mr HOLLIS**—But he has surely got a good point, though.

**Capt. Overton**—I agree with you.

**Mr HOLLIS**—Everyone is making the point about how safe it is but when you get it to the waterfront it suddenly becomes unsafe and has to be taken out to the middle of the harbour to be loaded.

**Capt. Overton**—It is not unsafe. We are obliged to conform to the NATO rules. The difference is that, when we are passing it through the city and driving, we are not actually picking up the stuff and moving it. When we transfer it from the truck on the barge to the ship, we are actually holding it in our hands and moving it across.

**Brig. Kelly**—At the risk, Mr Hollis, of raising the memories of our ECAC submission last year where we talked about such things for quite some long time, this would be related partly to the issue of the purple arc.

**Mr HOLLIS**—I knew it would come up somewhere!

**Brig. Kelly**—A moving truckload of ammunition basically does not have such a safeguarding arc around it but for static activities involving the use of ammunition we do impose what is called a safeguarding arc around it. It does not mean that it is unsafe; it is just a safeguarding measure. I will raise the example that we found last year. Defence was putting a two-kilometre zone around import of ammunition, and the committee discovered that the ship had already been to Queensland ports and unloaded substantial amounts of mining explosive alongside. That highlighted the difference between standard state regulations and the NATO specifications as employed by Defence. I suspect that the same might apply in the Northern Territory, where there are substantial amounts of explosives related to the mining industry, recreational shooting and so on which would be similar or greater than the amounts of ammunition that are taken into the base.

**Mr RIPOLL**—Can I follow up on that point. What, if any, other options have you available for the transportation of munitions?

**Brig. Kelly**—I cannot answer that. That is for Captain Overton.

**Mr RIPOLL**—What other options are available?

**Capt. Overton**—We could route it to another place, load it via another wharf and then take it to sea the other way, but it would be a much longer process if we did that.

**Senator MURPHY**—I have just one question with regard to the synchrolift. If and when the new vessels arrive, have the synchrolifts still got the capacity to cope with them? Are you happy with the capacity of the synchrolift? I just ask the question because of what Mr Pink was saying—that they had a large capacity synchrolift.

**Capt. Overton**—We do not know what the replacement for the Fremantle is going to be, but the synchrolift will take a vessel that is up to 55 metres in length and up to 10 metres in breadth, and it has the capacity of lifting 725 tonnes.

**Mr RIPOLL**—What is the largest capacity that we actually have?

**Capt. Overton**—The largest capacity that we actually lift up is the self-propelled water fuel lighter when it has fuel or water on it.

**Mr RIPOLL**—What is its weight?

**Capt. Overton**—It is about 400 tonnes.

**Brig. Kelly**—Anything from 260 tonnes to 1,200 tonnes.

**Senator MURPHY**—Mr Pink also raised a question about room. He had a view that there was insufficient room for the vessels. I know that it was only his opinion, but do you want to comment on that?

**Capt. Overton**—I am unaware of Mr Pink's qualifications as a ship driver, but when you go to sea this evening I will give you a demonstration of what is possible.

**Mr LINDSAY**—Mr Pink also said, in response to a question from me, that he did not think that this development was an appropriate project. But your evidence is that this is design specific: that the Darwin Naval Base is designed as a patrol boat base and that is all it is designed as. Do I understand that correctly?

**Capt. Overton**—Absolutely. Patrol boats and landing craft heavy and landing craft medium—the Army LCs.

**Mr LINDSAY**—Finally—and you may not wish to give public evidence about this and, if that is the case, I understand—the council said that one of their reasons for concern was



that they felt that the base was a significant military target. Do you have a response to that issue that they raised?

**Capt. Overton**—I can offer an opinion. For anyone wishing to strike Australia, there would be more valuable targets to select in Darwin than the Darwin Naval Base.

**Senator MURPHY**—They really want to knock those Bofors out!

**TEMPORARY CHAIR**—It is proposed that the correspondence be received, taken as read and incorporated in the transcript of evidence. Do members have any objections? There being no objection, it is so ordered.

*The letters read as follows—*

**TEMPORARY CHAIR**—Before closing, I would like to thank all the witnesses who have appeared today. I would particularly like to thank the representatives of the Army and the Navy for the frank way in which they have addressed all the problems and matters that have been raised. I would like to thank my committee members for their intelligent questions—some of which were very prickly! I thank Hansard and, in particular, I thank the secretariat for putting it all together.

Resolved (on motion by **Mr Hollis**):

That, pursuant to the power conferred by section 2(2) of the Parliamentary Papers Act 1908, this committee authorises publication of the evidence given before it and submissions presented at the public hearing this day.

**Committee adjourned at 4.28 p.m.**

