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Reference: Facilities for troop lift helicopter, RAAF Base Townsville, Queensland

FRIDAY, 18 AUGUST 2006

TOWNSVILLE

BY AUTHORITY OF THE PARLIAMENT

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**JOINT STATUTORY COMMITTEE ON
PUBLIC WORKS**

Friday, 18 August 2006

Members: Mrs Moylan (*Chair*), Mr Brendan O'Connor (*Deputy Chair*), Senators Forshaw, Parry and Troeth and Mr Forrest, Mr Jenkins, Mr Ripoll and Mr Wakelin

Members in attendance: Senator Parry, Mr Forrest and Mr Brendan O'Connor

Terms of reference for the inquiry:

To inquire into and report on:

Facilities for troop lift helicopter, RAAF Base Townsville, Queensland

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Committee met at 12.57 pm**LINDSAY, Mr Peter John, Member for Herbert, Commonwealth Parliament**

ACTING CHAIR (Mr Brendan O'Connor)—I declare open this public hearing into the provision of facilities for the troop lift helicopter at the RAAF Base Townsville, Queensland. This project was referred to the Joint Committee on Public Works on 1 June 2006 for consideration and report to the parliament. In accordance with subsection 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.

Early this morning the committee received a confidential briefing on the project costs from the Department of Defence and inspected the site of the proposed works. Before the committee hears evidence from the Department of Defence I invite the local federal member, the member for Herbert, Mr Peter Lindsay, to make some comments.

Mr Lindsay—Thank you, Mr Acting Chair. I welcome the committee to paradise; it is good to have you in Townsville this afternoon. On the face of it, this project looks a straightforward project but there are some facets that I want to raise with you, and you may care to raise them with Defence later on when you talk to them publicly, firstly, in relation to the public value of the work and the value to the Commonwealth of Australia. We are talking about 5 Aviation Regiment and about the latest acquisition in the Air 9000 project, the MRH90 helicopters and the support that 5 Aviation Regiment gives to Townsville's 3rd Brigade.

I remind you that 3rd Brigade is of course Australia's ready deployment force and needs to move on very short periods of notice. I remind you too that 5 Aviation Regiment, next to the SAS, is probably the busiest element in the Australian Army. It does an extraordinary job. From time to time I talk to Colonel Mick Pictor and he finds that when he looks out his window he has nothing to command because it is all away. Of course it all comes back, and there always has to be the training elements that the regiment needs to go through. The regiment needs to be close to its customer. That is also an argument for bringing the new LPAs to Townsville and homeporting them in the City of Townsville—but that is not related to this particular inquiry.

I read through the statement of evidence and I would like to assure you, as the local federal member, that in relation to the environmental issues—and you have seen that the proposed

works are right next to the town common—5 Aviation Regiment has been there for many years now and there have never been any issues, and there are not likely to be, with the proposed new construction and refurbishment. I have no concerns on those issues. In relation to the construction, which you are required to look at, there will not be any impact on the community other than a very positive impact, because this is a \$20 million project cost and that can only result in a very positive impact on our economy.

There are some issues that I would like you to bear in mind, which are not covered, as far as I can see, in the public documentation. With the arrival of the MRH90 there is likely to be the development of a very significant aerospace industry in this city. That potential is there. I have been fully briefed by the operators of the Townsville Airport on the civil side and I understand that they have given a submission to your committee, although they are not appearing publicly, in relation to their plans for looking after an aerospace industry that will follow from the MRH90. It may well be that you should ask Defence how they propose to deal with those issues: where the simulator for the MRH90 will be located; whether there is sufficient space to locate the simulator where it is proposed to be located—that simulator, as I understand it, will be purchased as part of this Air 9000 project. You should look at how Defence expect the helicopters to be supported and what kind of support is needed in relation to physical infrastructure and whether that is on the civil side of the airport or on the Army side of the airport. I would like to see the civil side of the airport made better use of. The 5 Aviation Regiment site that you saw this morning is quite crowded and there is not a lot of room for further expansion. We should be looking to the long term of this project and the potential down the track for what might develop in Townsville. I have also said publicly today that I am going to do everything I can to enhance the operations at RAAF Townsville across the runway from 5 Aviation Regiment, and you will see that is important in a minute.

I have said publicly that I am going to be working to get all of Australia's Caribou aircraft based in Townsville. It is probably going to further attract industry to the city if we have all of those aircraft located in Townsville. That may also require further development on the RAAF side of the airport. I am very keen to see the committee look in a holistic way to the future of what Defence proposes a little bit down the track for the city in relation to the development of the aviation industry.

Finally, there may well be the possibility of purchasing more CH47 Chinook helicopters. The CH47s have been a tremendous asset of the Australian Defence Force; they work very hard. If we are going to purchase some more of those, what is Defence's planning as to how you fit them in on the 5 Aviation Regiment site, because they are very large aircraft? I said to you that I needed only a couple of minutes. I think I have indicated to you some fairly substantial issues. I strongly back the expenditure of \$20 million. I think it is appropriate on the basis of the evidence that I have read, but I do want to see it in the context of the forward issues that I have raised with you. I appreciate the opportunity to appear before the committee this afternoon.

ACTING CHAIR—Thank you very much, Mr Lindsay. As a former member of the committee, you know that we inquire into these matters pursuant to the Public Works Act. We will look specifically at the project itself, but your statement today will provide us with some capacity to consider this project in the context of the matters you have raised.

[1.07 pm]

DAVIES, Wing Commander Graeme John, Base Commander and Commanding Officer, 323 Combat Support Squadron, RAAF Base Townsville

GASKILL, Wing Commander Rohan Sinclair, Project Director, Troop Lift Helicopter Facilities, Infrastructure Asset Development Branch, Department of Defence

GRICE, Colonel William Alfred, Acting Director General, Infrastructure Asset Development Branch, Department of Defence

HUDSON, Mr David Andrew, Project Manager, Thinc Projects

PRICTOR, Lieutenant Colonel Michael David, Commanding Officer, 5th Aviation Regiment, Australian Army

REMMERS, Mr Mark, Program Director, AIR 9000 MRH Program, Defence Materiel Organisation

RINAUDO, Mr Michael Aubrey, Manager, Defence and Security, Project Director Design Team, GHD Pty Ltd

Witnesses were then sworn or affirmed—

ACTING CHAIR—Welcome and thank you for meeting with us today. The committee has received a statement of evidence from the Department of Defence. This will be made available in a volume of submissions for the inquiry and is also available on the committee's website. Does the Department of Defence wish to propose amendments to the submission it has made to the committee?

Col. Grice—Yes, there is some supplementary information with regard to paragraph 24 of the submission. In particular, in the second sentence in paragraph 24 we state:

Government is currently considering some later phases of Project Air 9000, replacement of refurbishment of Black Hawk and replacement of Sea King helicopters.

On 19 June this year, the Prime Minister and the Minister for Defence announced the purchase of an additional 34 multirole helicopters and that these would be purchased under Project Air 9000 phases 4 and 6 to replace the remaining Black Hawks of 5 Aviation Regiment and the Sea King helicopter fleets.

My staff have recently commenced the development of the facilities requirement for phases 4 and 6, and part of this development will involve a detailed analysis of the existing facilities in all of the locations where the helicopters will be based, including detailed transition arrangements. As such, the scope of work and the costs for those future works have not yet been confirmed.

However, I would like to advise the committee that some time around this time next year we may be approaching the committee regarding these future works.

ACTING CHAIR—Thank you, Colonel Grice. I now invite a representative of the Department of Defence to make a brief opening statement, after which we will proceed to questions.

Col. Grice—This proposal seeks approval for the facilities for troop lift helicopters for 5 Aviation Regiment at RAAF Base Townsville for the Department of Defence. The Department of Defence is acquiring 12 multi-role helicopters as additional troop lift helicopters. Introduction of this single squadron of MRH90s necessitates the provision of training facilities for air crew and ground crew at Townsville, where the aircraft will be based. A range of operational and maintenance facilities are also needed to be modified to suit the different aircraft type.

Where possible, the proposed works re-use existing facilities, with necessary modifications and refurbishment. In addition, a new purpose-built facility is proposed for training and mission planning, while the proposed extensions to existing facilities will house other functions. This combination of re-use, new and extensions to existing facilities provides the best value for money solution for the Commonwealth and minimises adverse impacts of 5 Aviation Regiment. The budget for this project is \$20 million. This includes professional design and management fees and charges; construction; furniture, fittings and equipment; together with appropriate allowances for contingency and escalation. This project was foreshadowed as part of the 2006-07 defence budget. Subject to parliamentary clearance, it is intended to commence the works in late 2006, with the works being completed by early 2008.

With the permission of the committee, I would like to invite Mr Mark Remmers to provide a short presentation on the MRH90 troop lift helicopter. I believe the information in the presentation will help you to understand why the proposed works are required to support the introduction of the new equipment.

A video was then shown—

Mr Remmers—I will run through the presentation fairly quickly. The MRH90 is based on a NATO helicopter design, NH90. Currently we are procuring 12 of them under phase 2. We have just recently signed the contract to purchase an additional 34, but we will deal with that in future phases.

What you will see now is a film clip of the actual prototype aircraft that was brought out in 2004 as part of a marketing effort by Eurocopter, and it is actually flying in Townsville. The second part of the clip shows another prototype of the aircraft in a troop lift configuration in amphibious operations, which is what this aircraft will be doing from the LPAs and from the new Navy LHDs, which will be coming in the future. You also see there the electronic cockpit with the five displays.

The performance of the aircraft is not much different from a Black Hawk. In actual fact, it is slightly faster and goes a little further but still has two crew for pilot and two crew for loadmaster. However, it does carry 18 troops as opposed to the Black Hawk, with nine. You will see the configuration here with the troops. You will note the machine gun is out through the door.

The aircraft can also have 12 stretchers—you can see the bottom there—as opposed to the Black Hawk, which has only four. The aircraft is fully marinised, and it is composite material. You will see in the right-hand part of the display the actual fuselage itself, which is a monocoque single construction. It is three parts that have been glued and riveted together, and you will never see those parts come separately—that is the entire fuselage. To give you an idea of the percentage of the actual composite material, you will see the dark green of the lower part of the airframe, which is carbon fibre, and the lighter green of the upper part, which is fibreglass, to protect all the engines, the gearboxes and the ancillary equipment. Here you see a layout of the cockpit and, if you compare that with the Black Hawk you saw earlier today with all the dials and gauges, you will see that the pilots have a fair workload with the amount of electronic information presented to them.

The project is looking at phase 2 facilities in Townsville. As the colonel said previously, we will be looking at phase 4 for Townsville, Oakey and Brisbane later on next year. To give you an idea of some of the equipment—and we did mention that the ground mission management system would be employed in the building; this is one of the modules—you will see there a notebook computer in a mobile carrying case, and that is in the mission planning room. To give you an idea of the size comparison, in actual fact an MRH90 is 20 centimetres shorter and 10 centimetres lower and the disc is six centimetres smaller than a current Black Hawk. That is despite the fact that they can carry 18 troops. It does that because it has a rear ramp. We also had a look at the hangar today which showed that the Black Hawk parks nose first but the MRH90 must park tail first. You will see the highest point of the tail rotor there, which necessitates the moving of the lights in the hangar with the rear sloping roof. You were also given a quick brief on the levels of maintenance. This aircraft is subject to only two levels of maintenance: the operational level and a deeper level maintenance. Deeper level maintenance is normally done by the contractor and operational level maintenance is normally by the uniformed personnel on the flight line.

What is critical to building this initial facility and realigning the 5 Aviation precinct is the transition stage training, which is developed with a combination of Commonwealth and contractor personnel in Townsville. We have also made allowances for the ministerial requirement that the MRH90 replaces the Sea King, so we are looking at the additional training load that the Navy will bring to Townsville to train them up for their first six aircraft. To give you an idea of how intense the training will be, this view gives you a cross-section of the course details, starting in 2008 all the way through from pilot training, basic training, loadmaster training, technical and artificer training and virtual systems training. Only the white gaps in that entire program are blank slots for that training building. This is a picture of the aircraft which gives you an idea of its capability with the small—

ACTING CHAIR—I will start by asking whether Defence is confident that the project itself will provide enough flexibilities if there were changes to the way in which things were to operate here. We are clear now that there is a policy to relocate the Black Hawk helicopters and, once they are constructed, bring online the new multirole helicopters. Is there confidence that there will be sufficient flexibility to cope with any possible changes beyond what has already been proposed?

Col. Grice—The answer to that is, yes, we are sure there is sufficient flexibility. During the project development period for Air 9000 phase 2 we were unsure whether the Black Hawk would be retained or whether additional MRH90s would be purchased, so our planning considered both possibilities and we are well placed to continue development to now cater for the replacement of the remaining Black Hawks with MRH90s.

ACTING CHAIR—Can I indicate, as I did in the confidential hearing, that we were given a very good inspection of the site; it gave us some understanding of what is being undertaken. Colonel Grice, what is your view of the implications that Project Air 9000 will have on the current proposal?

Col. Grice—At this early stage, the requirements that we have identified for the replacement of B Squadron with MRH90s are that the remaining aircraft shelters will have to be modified in the same way that the nine aircraft shelters are being modified during phase 2. They are minor modifications and, as you saw this morning, it involves very minor work. The larger component of work that would be required for the replacement of B Squadron's Black Hawks would be the provision of another squadron-level mission planning area.

The training facility and the mission planning building have been designed so that a second mission planning facility can be built on top of the mission planning facility that we are building in phase 2. The design already incorporates that. Once we have come to the committee, we will be able to undertake those works.

As Mr Lindsay discussed, we are looking at the requirement for a deeper maintenance facility and for a simulator in Northern Queensland. The location for those will have to be assessed during phase 4. During phase 2, we looked at those things that would have a direct impact on 5 Aviation Regiment. From the drawings that we showed you this morning, you will recall a zone in the vicinity of the car park which is available for future development at 5 Aviation Regiment. During the development of phase 4 and phase 6 of the project outline, we will consider several options for the location of those facilities. We will consider their effect on 5 Aviation Regiment and whether they can be incorporated into the existing regiment area. One of the other options we will consider is whether it is possible to locate them on the civilian side of the airport.

At this stage we do not know the results of that investigation because they have not been undertaken. But, by the time we come back to the committee next year, we will have a decision on which option is best for taking into consideration operational logistics and support to the local community.

ACTING CHAIR—Paragraph 25 indicates that you are seeking to hold or that you have held consultations with the state and federal members for this area, the local council, and local community and environmental groups. Who has been consulted?

Col. Grice—We have prepared a fact sheet, which we have here, which has the dates on which the consultation with those people was undertaken and the names of those people who were consulted. I would like to enter that into the record.

ACTING CHAIR—That would be fine. Thank you very much.

Senator PARRY—Lieutenant Colonel Prictor, thank you for the great tour this morning. It was very clear and concise. You commented during the tour that one of the sections was planned through to 2011. Can you refresh my memory as to what facility you were referring to. We were standing outside one of the facilities when you said ‘through to 2011’.

Lt Col. Prictor—That was the combined mission planning and training facility.

Senator PARRY—What is going to happen in 2011?

Lt Col. Prictor—At that point, we anticipate that the training will move to Oakey and that the facility will be re-incorporated into regiment use.

Senator PARRY—So it will not be redundant; it will be re-occupied for another purpose?

Lt Col. Prictor—Absolutely.

Senator PARRY—Colonel Grice, you said that there are so many things we cannot say about the future because we do not know what is going to happen. Under ‘Option section’ in the submission, the options of rebuilding and relocating were dismissed as cost issues. Obviously, the infrastructure would be enormous. We could have a \$20 million spend now and \$50 million, say, next year. Has Defence undertaken any long-term strategic analysis of the absolute maximum utilisation of this space?

Col. Grice—Defence’s long-term plan is that RAAF Base Townsville will be an enduring base and that 5 Aviation Regiment will remain at RAAF Base Townsville. Some members of the committee may recall that back in 2001 there was a public hearing on the RAAF base redevelopment stage 2, and at that point a master plan was produced for the base. We are still developing the base in accordance with that master plan, which is that 5 Aviation Regiment will remain and the RAAF base will remain, and there is an option to relocate the Caribous to that area and that is still being explored by Defence.

Senator PARRY—In short, is Defence satisfied that the money spent is going to be utilised on a base that has strong permanency?

Col. Grice—That is correct. Our long-term commitment is for 5 Aviation Regiment to remain here as an enduring base.

Senator PARRY—I think Townsville Airport Pty Ltd, if I am not mistaken, is the owner of the local airport. There was a strong letter of support concerning the relationship between Defence and the local airport. Is there a lease and how long is that lease? If it is a short-term lease, is there any chance for future renewal?

Col. Grice—That is slightly outside my area. I would like to pass that over to the base commander, who is probably best placed to provide an answer to that question.

Wing Cmdr Davies—There is a joint user deed between Townsville Airport and Defence. It is currently in play and soon due for renewal. The expectation is that it will be renewed.

Senator PARRY—When you say ‘soon’, do you know a year or a month?

Col. Grice—It is a 99-year lease and there are 94 years left to run.

Senator PARRY—Okay—that is not soon!

Col. Grice—The joint user deed is different. The lease that the airport authority has is a 99-year lease with 94 years left to run.

Senator PARRY—Is that for the ownership of the airport with the use of the airport as a civilian airport?

Col. Grice—The other side of the airport, yes.

Senator PARRY—The lease we are talking about is Defence’s permission to use the airport. How enduring is that?

Col. Grice—That is a deed between Defence and Townsville Airport. I believe it was of 10 or 15 years duration.

Senator PARRY—Could you provide on notice brief advice indicating the terms and arrangements. We need to make sure that we are not going to invest \$20 million in a base that might become redundant next year with no ongoing lease.

Col. Grice—The RAAF base is Commonwealth land for defence purposes.

Senator PARRY—I am referring to access to the airport. I understand that the Department of Defence uses the civilian runway—is that correct?

Wing Cmdr Gaskill—The runway actually belongs to the Commonwealth and the lease is for the airport to actually make use of it.

Senator PARRY—So it is a reversal of what I was thinking.

Wing Cmdr Gaskill—Yes, it is the other way round.

Senator PARRY—Could we have clarification of those lease details to ensure there is continuing access, but it sounds as though there is. Occupational health and safety issues in regard to the composite section are obviously fairly critical. We were satisfied when we did the tour this morning that those issues were covered adequately. However, to get that on the public record, are you satisfied that all the occupational health and safety measures will be met concerning all building and construction areas, particularly the air extraction through the composite area? Is the composite area the cleaning and maintenance area?

Col. Grice—It is the composite workshop. That is correct. This will be a state-of-the-art facility, which will be in compliance with all relevant occupational health and safety guidelines. Defence is concerned about and looks after the health of its people. This facility will be inspected regularly and will meet the federal and state government requirements.

Senator PARRY—Thank you. It was certainly highlighted to us this morning. My final two points are about energy ratings. The building will be compliant with the best standards? I cannot find it in the submission, but I know that when I read it yesterday it had a ‘four green star’ rating. How does that relate to the other types of ratings?

Col. Grice—The new mission planning and training facility will be able to achieve a four green star rating. You will recall from previous presentations that the green star rating system was developed for office buildings. The mission planning and training facility has parts that are offices and then other areas that are classrooms, not classified as offices. But we are confident we could seek a four green star rating there.

Maybe I could go on and talk a little bit about the ecologically sustainable development features that we are going to build into the new buildings. The new facilities include a range of practical, environmentally sustainable design initiatives to both minimise and measure water and energy consumption. Many of these initiatives provide whole-of-life cost benefits. Key ESD initiatives that are included in the new facilities include the installation of waterless urinals to save on waste, energy efficient lighting using high-efficiency T5 fluorescent lights with electronic ballast, motion sensor lighting switching for amenities and meeting rooms, and the specification of a building management system for the new buildings which will control office area lighting to shut down lighting outside of standard working hours.

We will be installing energy meters on all major energy loads in the new buildings and linking them with the building management system, we will be installing water meters on all major sources of water consumption and we will be controlling air-conditioning systems with zone management systems that also have the capacity to control energy use by a zone or individual room basis. We will also be using time-of-day control of boiling water units and refrigerated drinking units and we have specified AAA water efficiency rated taps in the showers and ablution areas, 6A waterless urinals and 4A toilet suites.

Senator PARRY—That was not a bad brief explanation! Thanks.

ACTING CHAIR—It is on the record now. We love ablutions! Usually Mr Jenkins goes through the ablutions, but he is not here, so thanks for providing that without too much of an effort.

Mr FORREST—I usually ask the questions about the ablution block!

ACTING CHAIR—There is a demarcation on ablutions!

Mr FORREST—Going back to the new helicopter, I want you to explain again the reason for the tail parking and the modifications. The reason I ask this question is that I served on Public Works when we did the inquiry on those new hangars. I arrived here and all the Black Hawks were out in the weather. I want you to assure me that the modifications are only minor, that it is

just a matter of shifting lights. But then I am curious about why you want to park it with the tail first. Why can't you do that with the Black Hawks? What is happening there?

Col. Grice—I will pass to Mark Remmers in a little bit to talk about why the aircraft is parked in a different direction but, to summarise the scope of works, the wheelbase on the MRH90 is a little bit wider than the wheelbase on the Black Hawk. Today you would have seen the concrete pads that accommodate the wheels of the Black Hawk helicopter. Those pads will be widened so that the new helicopters will be able to park there.

Mr FORREST—So it is the hardstand and the lights—that is all you are talking about modifying?

Col. Grice—The hardstand and the lights, and there is an upgrade to the fire detection systems to provide heat and flame detection. There will be enhanced fire detection in each of the shelters. You may have noticed there is a rear access door, or a side access door, on some of those, and in accordance with the defence security manual we have to upgrade some of the locks on those doors so that we have access control.

Mr FORREST—I forgive you for not foreseeing that 10 years ago. But why would you want to park it tail first?

Mr Remmers—If you were to tow an MRH90 nose first into the hangar, there would be insufficient room at the front of the aircraft for the tow motor to disconnect and have the aircraft in the proper position in the hangar. It is just physically better to push the thing in. You would leave a lot more room at the back to manoeuvre and you would make better use of the hangar.

Mr FORREST—The fuselage is not strong enough to tow it from the rear, though—is that why?

Mr Remmers—No, the MRH90 must be towed from the nose wheel and the Black Hawk is towed from the tail wheel.

Col. Grice—Those are the characteristics of the equipment.

Mr Remmers—You hook up a tow bar to the wheel then hook it to one of those small tractors you saw today for the ground support equipment, and that drives it around and pushes it into the hangar. Physically, there is insufficient room to tow an aircraft into the hangar.

Mr FORREST—Okay. The other thing I have just noted is that you will have a lot of work. You will still want to be operational so you are going to have a logistics nightmare in planning. Which facilities are you doing first? Could you just run us through how you have thought all that through and what the cost implications are?

Col. Grice—We can enter into the record a phasing plan which shows the phasing for the works. The works are relatively simple and the simplicity is enhanced because when this work will be undertaken the 171 Aviation Squadron Black Hawks will have relocated to Holsworthy—and you will recall that project that we took to the committee last year—and 171 Aviation Squadron will relocate to Holsworthy over this Christmas period. These works that will be

conducted in the aircraft shelters will be conducted when there are no aircraft there. So we have scope to be able to complete those works.

You will also note that there is a new car park, a new training admission planning building and a new annexe up the back for the GSE storage outside the back of the repair parts store. The first phase of the construction will be for the construction of all of those new elements, and that will not interfere with any of the works going on in the hangars. The second stage will be the relocation of some elements out of the workshops and into the new facilities that we have constructed. That will leave those areas vacant so that we can then undertake the reconfiguration of those areas. We have a decanting plan which we would like to enter into the evidence and you can pursue it at your leisure.

Mr FORREST—That is one of the major reasons why the project is spread out. Mr Lindsay made reference to the community common—and I lost the purpose of why he would mention that given that we do not have any evidence that there is anxiety. Do you understand what Mr Lindsay was talking about?

Col. Grice—Yes. You will recall when we were at the back of the aircraft shelters I pointed to the green area over the fence, which is the town common. It is a coastal wetlands area frequented by birds and is the town environmental park. I think that he was stating that he had no concern that pollutants from the 5 Aviation Regiment would interfere with the town common, and we agree with him.

Mr FORREST—Is that because you have already got incorporated sumps and oil interceptors and this particular project does not need any enhancement?

Col. Grice—Currently, our 5 Aviation Regiment is serviced by four oil-water separators, and I pointed out one of those which was located behind the aircraft shelters. All of the service run-off from the 5 Aviation Regiment precinct is channelled into stormwater drains which go through four sets of oil-water separators so that solids and oil are separated prior to disposal into the town common. Most of the new construction is on small areas around and in the 5 Aviation Regiment precinct. The only area that may be of concern was the new car park and we will be installing additional treatment capability to cater for the flow from the car park before it goes into the stormwater.

It is probably worth mentioning that CSI North Queensland also does groundwater monitoring of the flows across the aviation base. There are approximately 50 groundwater monitoring bores on the site. At 5 Aviation Regiment six bores monitor the health of the groundwater near potentially contaminated areas and five bores directly monitor the integrity of underground fuel tanks that are installed there. This is done on an annual basis so we are monitoring to ensure that there is no groundwater plume and we are quite happy that we will not affect the town common.

Mr FORREST—I think you have satisfied me on the car park, because that is all new greenfields work so presumably that drainage will connect into the existing system in some way. It would not be any more risky in terms of contaminants than anything else around the site—

Col. Grice—That is correct. The same number of vehicles will park in 5 Aviation Regiment as park there now. We have calculated that the extra hardstand space may increase the stormwater

flows by about four per cent because a car park is less permeable than the ground. This is a very modest increase in overwater flows.

Mr FORREST—My last concern is to do with security. The site being next to a civilian airport, it occurs to me that anybody can come across the tarmac and over the runway. How does Defence coordinate security with no fence to keep non-defence people out of the site?

Wing Cmdr Davies—Both the Air Force, the military defence, side of the base and the Townsville Airport are secure areas. Townsville Airport has security systems in place with airside identity cards for all their personnel on the hardstand and the airside of the airport. So access to the hardstand is restricted anyway. The Defence part of the airfield similarly has security measures in place. Both Townsville Airport and Defence have security and safety patrols frequenting the area. Defence's side includes military working dogs.

Mr FORREST—So the civilian side would have the same status as the Defence side.

Wing Cmdr Davies—Sorry—say again?

Col. Grice—He is wondering if the civilian side runs a safe base series of precautions.

Wing Cmdr Davies—I do not believe they do.

Col. Grice—But there are standard security requirements for airports that are set by the Department of Transport and Regional Services. I am not aware of whether they have a graduated response to security situations. They probably do, but I do not think we are capable of answering that question for you.

Wing Cmdr Davies—We also have regular meetings with Townsville Airport on a whole bunch of issues, including safety, environment, security, emergency response and so forth.

Mr FORREST—But, if I have a civilian ticket to the other side and I get a bit curious and want to come over and have a look at this new helicopter when it is here, who is going to challenge me?

Wing Cmdr Davies—You would be apprehended by a defence person with a very angry dog.

ACTING CHAIR—So we would want you to take that option!

Mr FORREST—I would like to congratulate Defence on presenting us with all the necessary good information.

Senator PARRY—And a good submission.

ACTING CHAIR—I concur with both Senator Parry and Mr Forrest. As I said earlier, the inspection was very comprehensive. It is obviously a very straightforward project compared to some of the others we have to deal with, and it does not involve so many other bodies, organisations or individuals—I guess that also makes it easier. I would like to thank Defence for preparing such a good inspection and submission today. Before closing I would like to thank the

witnesses who appeared before the committee today and those people who assisted our inspections and private briefings this morning.

Resolved (on motion by **Senator Parry**):

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 public hearing this day.

Committee adjourned at 1.43 pm