

Introduction

Referral of Work

- 1.1 On 24 June 2003 the proposal to construct a new main entrance at the Lucas Heights Science and Technology Centre, Lucas Heights, NSW was referred to the Public Works Committee for consideration and report to the Parliament in accordance with the provisions of the *Public Works Committee Act 1969* (the Act).¹ The proponent agency for this work is the Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation (ANSTO).
- 1.2 The Hon Peter Slipper MP, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Finance and Administration, advised the House that the estimated cost of the proposed works was \$10.366 million. Mr Slipper noted further that, subject to Parliamentary approval, construction will start late this year and be completed in 2005.

1 Extract from the Votes and Proceedings of the House of Representatives, No. 104, Tuesday, 24 June 2003.

Background

The Lucas Heights Science and Technology Centre

- 1.3 The purpose of ANSTO is set out in the *Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation Act 1987* (Cwlth).²
- 1.4 ANSTO is Australia's national research and development organization with a salaried staff of approximately 850.³ Its main site is located at the Lucas Heights Science and Technology Centre (LHSTC), 30 kilometres south-west of Sydney's Central Business District, in the Sutherland Shire of New South Wales. The LHSTC occupies 70 hectares and is surrounded by a 1.6 kilometre buffer zone.⁴
- 1.5 The LHSTC houses Australia's sole research reactor, The High Flux Australian Reactor (HIFAR), which produces nuclear and radioactive products for use in medicine and industry. The site also houses the Replacement Research Reactor (RRR), currently under construction.⁵

Enhancing Security

- 1.6 In response to the heightened national and international security threat, following the events of 11 September 2001, ANSTO commissioned the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO) to undertake a security review to assess the adequacy of security measures at the LHSTC.⁶
- 1.7 ASIO recommended that ANSTO commission the services of experts in high-security facility design to plan the new main entrance facility. Both ASIO and ANSTO worked closely with the engineering consulting company Cox CDD to ensure that the design met national and international security requirements.⁷

2 *Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Act 1987* (Cwlth)

3 Appendix C, Submission No. 1, paragraphs 1 and 5

4 *ib id*, paragraphs 17 and 18

5 *ib id*, paragraph 1

6 *ib id*, paragraph 2

7 *ib id*, paragraph 4

Inquiry Process

- 1.8 The Committee is required by the Act to consider public works over \$6 million⁸ and report to Parliament on:
- the purpose of the work and its suitability for that purpose;
 - the need for, or the advisability of, carrying out the work;
 - whether the money to be expended on the work is being spent in the most cost effective manner;
 - the amount of revenue the work will generate for the Commonwealth, if that is its purpose; and
 - the present and prospective public value of the work.⁹
- 1.9 The Committee called for submissions by advertising the inquiry in *The Australian* on Wednesday, 3 September and Wednesday, 17 September 2003 and in the *Sydney Morning Herald* on Saturday, 30 August 2003. The Committee also sought submissions from relevant government agencies, local government, private organisations and individuals, who may be materially affected by or have an interest in the proposed work. The Committee subsequently placed submissions and other information relating to the inquiry on its web site in order to encourage further public participation.

Inspections and Public Hearing

- 1.10 On Friday, 17 October 2003, the Committee visited the LHSTC and inspected the scope and environs of the proposed works. Following inspections, a public hearing was held at the LHSTC.¹⁰

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

9 *Public Works Committee Act 1969*, Part III, Section 17

10 See Appendix D for the official Hansard transcript of the evidence taken by the Committee at the public hearing on Friday, 17 October 2003 at Lucas Heights, NSW.

