

REDFIN Phase 1B Infrastructure – Facilities required for the new fleet of Special Operations Vehicles

- 3.1 The Department of Defence (Defence) seeks approval from the Committee to provide the infrastructure necessary to support a new fleet of special operations vehicles (SOV) and enhanced communications capability that is being provided under Joint Project 2097 (REDFIN) Phase 1, in four different locations across Australia.¹
- 3.2 The estimated cost of the project is \$50.5 million, excluding GST.
- 3.3 The project was referred to the Committee on 17 June 2015.

Conduct of the inquiry

- 3.4 Following referral, the inquiry was publicised on the Committee’s website and via media release.
- 3.5 The Committee received one submission and two supplementary submissions from Defence. A list of submissions can be found at Appendix A.
- 3.6 The Committee received a briefing from Defence and conducted an inspection in Perth on 6 August 2015 and conducted public and in-camera hearings in Perth on 7 August 2015. A transcript of the public hearing and the public submissions to the inquiry are available on the Committee’s website.²

1 Defence, submission 1, p. 11.

2 <www.aph.gov.au/pwc>

Need for the works

- 3.7 Joint Project 2097 (REDFIN) Phase 1 will provide the Special Air Service Regiment (SASR), based at Campbell Barracks in Perth, and the 2nd Commando Regiment (2 Cdo Regt), based at Holsworthy Barracks in Sydney with a new range of SOV.³
- 3.8 These vehicles will help both units to support the Special Forces and improve the efficiency of tactical network communications across the full spectrum of Special Operations.⁴
- 3.9 The vehicles are highly mobile and are able to be transported in a range of Defence aircraft and ships, allowing the Special Forces to operate in a variety of environments both within Australia and overseas.⁵
- 3.10 Suitable infrastructure is required to support the introduction and subsequent operation of the new fleet. This will include vehicle storage hangars and loading/inspection ramps.⁶
- 3.11 Additionally, the current long range patrol radio system (LRPRS) requires upgrading. In order to provide deployed radio users with the geographical coverage required for Special Operations missions, four fixed control stations (FCS) are to be located at Campbell Barracks in Perth, Holsworthy Barracks in Sydney, Lavarack Barracks in Townsville, and Defence Establishment Howard Springs in Darwin. Under the REDFIN project, existing facilities in Perth, Sydney and Darwin will be upgraded and new facilities will be constructed in Townsville.⁷
- 3.12 During the site inspection, the Committee saw ageing communications infrastructure and noted the SOV that had already been delivered as part of Joint Project 2097 (REDFIN) Phase 1 were stored in temporary hangars.
- 3.13 The Committee is satisfied that the need for the work exists.

Options considered

- 3.14 Defence considered a number of options including the adaptive reuse of existing facilities and the construction of new facilities at the proposed site.⁸

3 Defence, submission 1, p. 1.

4 Defence, submission 1, p. 2.

5 Defence, submission 1, p. 2.

6 Defence, submission 1, pp. 2-4.

7 Defence, submission 1, p. 5.

8 Defence, submission 1, p. 6.

- 3.15 Defence aims to adaptively reuse existing facilities where possible. For project elements where this is not possible, alternative sites are considered in accordance with Defence's established Site Selection Process.⁹
- 3.16 For this project, Defence proposes to adaptively reuse three existing LRPRS FCS facilities in Perth, Sydney and Darwin.¹⁰
- 3.17 As there is no existing LRPRS FCS facility in Townsville, both RAAF Base Townsville and Lavarack Barracks were considered as potential sites. The extent of the work required to construct the antenna farm and communications links on the RAAF base, together with extensive siting constraints, meant that this site was significantly less desirable than the proposed site at Lavarack Barracks, which had minimal siting constraints.¹¹
- 3.18 Existing SOV storage facilities in Sydney are reusable however Defence proposes to construct new ones to supplement these.¹²
- 3.19 When considering potential sites for the storage facilities in both Sydney and Perth, consideration was primarily given to available space and the need for strong links between the SOV facilities and key functional areas of SASR and 2 Cdo Reg.¹³
- 3.20 The Committee found that Defence has considered multiple options to deliver the project and has selected the most suitable option.

Scope of the works

- 3.21 Defence has separated the works into six scope elements.
- 3.22 *Scope Element 1 - SOV Facilities Campbell Barracks*
The proposed SOV facilities will include the following elements:
- secure garaging for SOV, including working accommodation and secure storage for specialist SOV equipment;
 - hard-standing for containerised SOV stores; and
 - storage for petrol, oil and lubricants associated with the SOV.¹⁴
- 3.23 *Scope Element 2 - LRPRS FCS Campbell Barracks*
The proposed communications facilities at Campbell Barracks consist largely of masts and antennas that replace existing antennas (of similar

9 Defence, submission 1, p. 7.

10 Defence, submission 1, pp. 6-7.

11 Defence, submission 1, p. 8.

12 Defence, submission 1, p. 7.

13 Defence, submission 1, p. 8.

14 Defence, submission 1, p. 13.

size and type), and construction of a new equipment shelter within the existing antenna farm. Minor works within the existing fibre transmission building which support this installation are also proposed.¹⁵

3.24 *Scope Element 3 - SOV Facilities Holsworthy Barracks*

The proposed SOV facilities will include the following elements:

- secure garaging for SOV including working accommodation for staff assigned to the SOV fleet and secure storage for specialist SOV equipment;
- adaptive reuse of two existing hanger spaces for SOV storage;
- hard-standing for containerised SOV stores;
- upgrade of an existing loading ramp to meet SOV specifications; and
- provision of additional ICT and power reticulation to the existing workshop to meet SOV servicing requirements.¹⁶

3.25 *Scope Element 4 - LRPRS FCS Holsworthy Barracks*

The proposed communications facilities at Holsworthy Barracks consist largely of masts and antennas that replace existing antennas (of similar size and type). Minor works to run additional cabling between the existing FCS and unit radio room are also required.¹⁷

3.26 *Scope Element 5 - LRPRS FCS Lavarack Barracks Works*

The proposed communications facilities at Lavarack Barracks require the establishment of a new FCS as there is currently not one located in Townsville. The proposed works incorporate installation of new antennas and masts, an equipment shelter and cabling to an existing radio room within Lavarack Barracks. This radio room will require refurbishment to accommodate the new FCS requirements.¹⁸

3.27 *Scope Element 6 - LRPRS FCS Defence Establishment Howard Springs*

The proposed communications facilities at Defence Establishment Howard Springs consist largely of masts and antennas that replace existing antennas (of similar size and type). Minor works to run additional cabling between the existing FCS and site radio room are also required.¹⁹

3.28 At the public hearing, Defence told the Committee that the design life of the SOV is approximately 20 years²⁰, with the storage facilities expected to last 30-40 years.²¹

15 Defence, submission 1, p. 13.

16 Defence, submission 1, pp. 13-14.

17 Defence, submission 1, p. 14.

18 Defence, submission 1, p. 14.

19 Defence, submission 1, p. 14.

20 Brigadier David Wainwright, Defence, transcript of evidence, 7 August 2015, p. 3.

3.29 The Committee asked questions regarding the LRPRS, particularly with regard to its capabilities and scope. Defence responded:

...it is designed predominantly for special forces operations to meet our roles globally, regionally and domestically. That said, we will be in many cases in support of... interagency partners. But it is predominantly our backbone for small teams to work to meet government's needs wherever required. It is the assurance program that this communication system provides.²²

3.30 A communications specialist for Defence elaborated:

The Long Range Patrol Radio System supports special reconnaissance missions conducted by special operations command – that is the requirement for the larger antenna arrays that we have within the [antenna] farms. They have an extended range out to 5,000 kilometres and also through coalition sharing arrangements allow us access to like facilities globally. The Long Range Patrol Radio System that accesses these antenna is used primarily for special operations command. As Brigadier Wainwright mentioned it can also be used in joint operations for wider ADF or coalition where we are attached to those operations but the patrol radio system itself is used only by special operations command.²³

3.31 The Committee sought further information on the lifespan of the communications portion of the project. Defence's communications specialist responded:

The lifespan is different depending on which component of the network we are talking about. In relation to the facilities, the previous facilities have supported us for 40 years in relation to the Long Range Patrol Radio System anchoring antennas. We would anticipate that these new facilities...to last probably another 30 to 40 years. Those antennas will sustain us for a long period of time. I would expect the SATCOM [satellite communications] antennas, with the constant change of technology, to be upgraded numerous times over that period but larger antenna arrays and the more significant investment will sustain us for a long period of time and

21 Mr Tony Allen, Davis Langdon Pty Ltd, transcript of evidence, 7 August 2015, p. 3.

22 Brigadier David Wainwright, Defence, transcript of evidence, 7 August 2015, p. 3.

23 Witness A (protected identity), Defence, transcript of evidence, 7 August 2015, pp. 3-4.

represent excellent value for money given how much we use them.²⁴

3.32 Speaking about the satellite networks' capability, the communications specialist continued:

It is one of the most highly capable satellite networks globally and represents excellent value for money now that we have invested in the satellite communications. Therefore, what we seek to do is procure satellite terminals on the ground which can access a network for which we have already paid.²⁵

3.33 Subject to Parliamentary approval of the project, work is expected to commence in February 2016, with staged completion taking place between mid-2016 and mid-2018.²⁶

3.34 At the public hearing, Defence outlined the schedule for staged completion:

The works will be staged via three head contracts: the first at Campbell Barracks, which will be conducted with the Campbell Barracks Redevelopment Project, and that is expected to occur from February 2017, with completion about a year later; as to the second, which is the Holsworthy Barracks SOV facility, which will be its own head contract, right now we are anticipating that that will commence around February 2016 with completion later that year. There are the fixed control station sites, all four of which will form one head contract arrangement. We intend to stage those works by location. They will be done individually. What that does is to de-risk the facilities build program with the Special Operations Command requirements, so we are not taking out more than one fixed control station at a time. We will commence with Lavarack Barracks in April 2016 with completion in mid-2016. We will then move to Defence Establishment Howard Springs, which we expect to run between August 2016 and later that year. We will then move to Holsworthy Barracks and run between late 2016 and early 2017, and then, finally, to Campbell Barracks from April 2018 with completion expected mid-2018.²⁷

3.35 The Committee finds that the proposed scope of works is suitable for the works to meet its purpose.

24 Witness A (protected identity), Defence, transcript of evidence, 7 August 2015, p. 4.

25 Witness A (protected identity), Defence, transcript of evidence, 7 August 2015, p. 4.

26 Defence, submission 1, p. 20.

27 Major Simon Everett, Defence, transcript of evidence, 7 August 2015, p. 2.

Community consultation

- 3.36 Defence undertook several consultative activities:
- detailed email correspondence with local groups and State and Federal members, with individual briefings conducted where requested;²⁸
 - advertisements in local newspapers in Perth, Townsville, Sydney's Western Suburbs and Darwin with information on the proposed projects and on opportunities to provide comment;²⁹ and
 - a public consultation session held on 7 July 2015 in Perth. Given that a large element of this project in Perth relates to Campbell Barracks (see Chapter 2 of this report), the public consultation session for REDFIN was held in conjunction with the consultation for the proposed Campbell Barracks redevelopment project.³⁰
- 3.37 At the public consultation, Defence confirmed that construction traffic would not use Campbell Barracks' main entrance, thus reducing traffic congestion around this intersection. Additionally, Defence advised that the construction contractor will be required to work with Main Roads Western Australia to ensure all construction traffic is managed appropriately.³¹
- 3.38 A question was raised regarding the impact of the works on the Carnaby's Black Cockatoo.³² At the public hearing, Defence stated:
- Yes, Carnaby's black cockatoo... was identified as a rare species that is present or has had presence within the area of the Campbell Barracks redevelopment during our inspection or our reviews of the proposed sites for development of Campbell Barracks and in particular the proposed site for the REDFIN Phase 1 Bravo vehicle shelter. One tree in the middle of that location has been identified as one of seven trees that are seen as being a suitable habitat for Carnaby's black cockatoo. Despite its being one of seven – and that tree will be removed as part of the proposed development – no subsequent impact on the actual survivability or sustainability of Carnaby's black cockatoo has been identified.³³

28 Defence, submission 1.2, pp. 3-5.

29 Defence, submission 1.2, pp. 6-7.

30 Defence, submission 1.2, pp. 8-11.

31 Defence, submission 1.2, p. 11.

32 Defence, submission 1.2, p. 10.

33 Brigadier Noel Beutel, Defence, transcript of evidence, 7 August 2015, p. 6.

Cost of the works

- 3.39 The estimated cost of the project is \$50.5 million, excluding GST.
- 3.40 Defence provided further detail on the project costs and contingency levels in the confidential submission and during the in-camera hearing.
- 3.41 The Committee considers that the cost estimates for the project have been adequately assessed by Defence and the Committee is satisfied that the proposed expenditure is cost effective. As the project will not be revenue generating the Committee makes no comment in relation to this matter.
- 3.42 At the public hearing, Defence stated that all Defence contracts aim to support small and medium enterprises which stimulates economic and employment opportunity in local communities. This, however, is weighed up against the need to provide value for money, which is the Defence's primary responsibility.³⁴

Committee comments

- 3.43 The Committee did not identify any issues of concern with Defence's proposal and is satisfied that the project has merit in terms of need, scope and cost.
- 3.44 Proponent agencies must notify the Committee of any changes to the project scope, time, cost, function or design. The Committee also requires that a post-implementation report be provided within three months of completion of the project. A report template can be found on the Committee's website.
- 3.45 Having regard to its role and responsibilities contained in the *Public Works Committee Act 1969*, the Committee is of the view that this project signifies value for money for the Commonwealth and constitutes a project which is fit for purpose, having regard to the established need.

Recommendation 3

- 3.46 **The Committee recommends that the House of Representatives resolve, pursuant to Section 18(7) of the *Public Works Committee Act 1969*, that it is expedient to carry out the following proposed work: REDFIN Phase 1B Infrastructure - Facilities required for the new fleet of Special Operations Vehicles.**

34 Brigadier Noel Beutel, Defence, transcript of evidence, 7 August 2015, p. 6.