

Joint Standing Committee of Northern Australia

Inquiry into Opportunities and Methods for Stimulating the Tourism Industry in Northern Australia

Department of Infrastructure, Regional Development and Cities – Questions on Notice arising from the 25 May 2018 public hearing about the Department’s role in the Indian Ocean Territories

1. Cocos (Keeling) Islands Airfield Upgrade (Hansard p.2)

Question

Mr SNOWDON: Given that we're unlikely to meet again after today, could you please provide the committee with advice through the Department of Defence on what infrastructure they're proposing to build in conjunction with the airport, including options for accommodation for defence personnel?

Ms Pidgeon: We'll consult with the Department of Defence. We're happy to ask them to provide that to the committee.

Answer

The Department has referred this query to the Department of Defence.

2. Facilities Management Contract – Christmas Island (Hansard p.3)

Question

Mr SNOWDON: Do we know if the care and maintenance contracts that are being let for the department responsible are going to local communities, or are they going to off-island companies?

Ms Pidgeon: I think it's being assessed now. They ran a tender process in March, and I think they're just going through the assessment process. I don't think they've ordered a contract yet.

Mr SNOWDON: Is there any indication that they might provide a local preference clause within those contracts?

Answer - Provided by Estate Management Branch, Department of Home Affairs

The tender for Staff Accommodation, Concierge and Facilities Management Services on Christmas Island (CI FM Tender) RFT 0418 is being managed in accordance with the Commonwealth Procurement Rules. As the tender process has not concluded, no further details can be provided at this stage to ensure probity, transparency and equity in the tender process.

The approach being made to market is via an ‘open’ tender process. As part of the evaluation criteria, tenderers are required to demonstrate in their submission that they will maximise the benefit to the Australian economy.

3. Release of Crown land on Christmas Island (Hansard p.3)

Question

Mr SNOWDON: Around the issue of land, where does this land release fit within what might be the strategic plan of the local shire—in terms of their strategic planning for development on the island?

Ms Pidgeon: I think their current strategic plan was for 2018 and they made some minor amendments to extend it out to 2021. They will be intimately involved in the development of the strategic plan for Christmas Island, as the shire president and a number of other shire members are members of the regional development organisation.

Mr SNOWDON: That's not my question. I want to know how the land release matches with the strategic plan of the shire.

Ms Pidgeon: I'd have to take that on notice. When we did the Christmas Island Crown Land Management Plan last year, and we released that in March, we did take into account the town planning scheme and land that was identified for development by the shire.

Answer

The release of Crown land on CI supports the Shire of Christmas Island's Local Planning Strategy by ensuring that land is made available for economic development opportunities, such as private investment and tourism accommodation. Actions to be undertaken in the Shire's Strategy are complemented by elements in the Crown Land Management Plan.

The Shire of Christmas Island's Local Planning Strategy is available at:
< <https://shire.gov.cx/en/shire-services-building-planning/land-use> >

The Christmas Island Crown Land Management Plan is available on the Department's website at:
<http://regional.gov.au/territories/Christmas/land_management.aspx>

Representatives of the Shire of Christmas Island participated in consultations on the Draft Christmas Island Crown Land Management Plan undertaken by the Department during 31 March – 21 April 2016. An overview of submissions made during the consultation period and how they influenced the development of the final Plan is available on the Department's website at:
<<http://regional.gov.au/territories/Christmas/files/Overview-Submissions-Christmas-Island-Crown-Land-Management-Plan-Consultation-draft.pdf>>

4. Zoning of sites released (Hansard p.8)

Question

Mr SNOWDON: I just have a few questions I need to finish. I've looked at the maps and I understand the country. I think I know who's got the proposals for up near the airport at 10 and 11. I'm assuming that's a farm. But I'm just wondering if you can give us a list of all the purposes for which each of these sites are being made available and/or leased.

Ms Pidgeon: The purpose will be clearer for the leased sites, because there's only one proponent making an application for those sites. The others will be sold, and the purpose will depend on who actually buys the property, and the development application plan that they then make to the shire specifically for that land.

Mr SNOWDON: Well, let me put it another way. Would you be able to tell us whether they're for residential purposes or commercial purposes—tourism?

Ms Pidgeon: It will depend on who buys them. If the zoning allows for a commercial activity or residential, the proponent could do either if their purpose—

Mr SNOWDON: Could you give us a list of each of these sites and the zoning for which they have been made available.

Answer

Zoning of the 11 sites proposed for release is determined by the Shire of Christmas Island Local Planning Scheme No. 2, which is available on the Shire of Christmas Island's website at:
 < <https://shire.gov.cx/en/shire-services-building-planning/land-use>>

The Shire of Christmas Island Local Planning Scheme No. 2 is also available on the website of the WA Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage at:

<[https://www.planning.wa.gov.au/LPS/DATA/Local%20Planning%20Schemes/Christmas%20Island%20-%20Shire%20of%20\(Scheme%202\)/index.aspx](https://www.planning.wa.gov.au/LPS/DATA/Local%20Planning%20Schemes/Christmas%20Island%20-%20Shire%20of%20(Scheme%202)/index.aspx)>

Site boundaries for sale or lease will be finalised through the Crown Land Enquiry Form process and therefore the zoning in the below table is subject to change as the boundaries finalise.

For sale on the open market:

Site Number	Land Parcel	Shire of Christmas Island Local Planning Scheme No.2 Zoning
1	Current golf course area and coastal area to the west of Golf Course Road	Crown reserve
	Current golf course area, area to the north of the course and area to the west of the course	Crown Reserve and Public Open Space
2	North of Phosphate Hill Road and east of Irvine Hill Road	Rural
3	North of the sports oval at Phosphate Hill	Crown reserve, Urban development and Rural
4	Northeast of Silver City, bounded by Murray Road	Urban development
5	North of Silver City, bounded by Murray Road	Urban development
6	North of Plant Hill Road, bounded by Murray Road	Urban development
7	Southwest of Pak Kam Loh in Silver City	Residential

For lease:

Site	Land Parcel	
8	42-56 Gaze Road	Tourism
9	Next to the intersection of Lily Beach Road and Link-Water Road	Crown reserve
10	East of Phosphate Hill Road and west of the airport	Rural and Public purposes: airport
11	North of Irvine Hill Road and west of the airport	Rural, Crown reserve and Public purposes: airport

5. Northern Flight (Hansard p.9)

Question

Mr SNOWDON: I want to ask about the northern flight. How often does it operate at the moment and what's its destination?

Ms Pidgeon: I believe there are two northern flight charter services at the moment. One is operated by Garuda in concert with, I think, Christmas Island exchange, and that flies once a week on a Saturday, to Jakarta. The second service is operated by Malindo Air, and that operates once a fortnight, I believe on a Monday, to KL.

Mr SNOWDON: What do you know of their loadings?

Ms Pidgeon: I wouldn't have those figures, I'm sorry.

Mr SNOWDON: Okay. Could you find them for us and get back to us, please.

Answer

Christmas Island Air has provided the following passenger and freight data flights travelling from Christmas Island to Jakarta, for January to 19 May 2018:

- January 2018 – 252 passengers and freight 1,814 kg
- February 2018 – 194 passengers and freight 1,849 kg.
- March 2018 – 201 passengers and freight 4,585 kg.
- April 2018 – 253 passengers and freight 2,320 kg.
- Flights to 19 May 2018 – 89 passengers and freight 1,748 kg.

Data for the Malindo flight was not made available by the charter operator within the available timeframe.

6. Quarantine Station Land Use (Hansard p.9)

Question

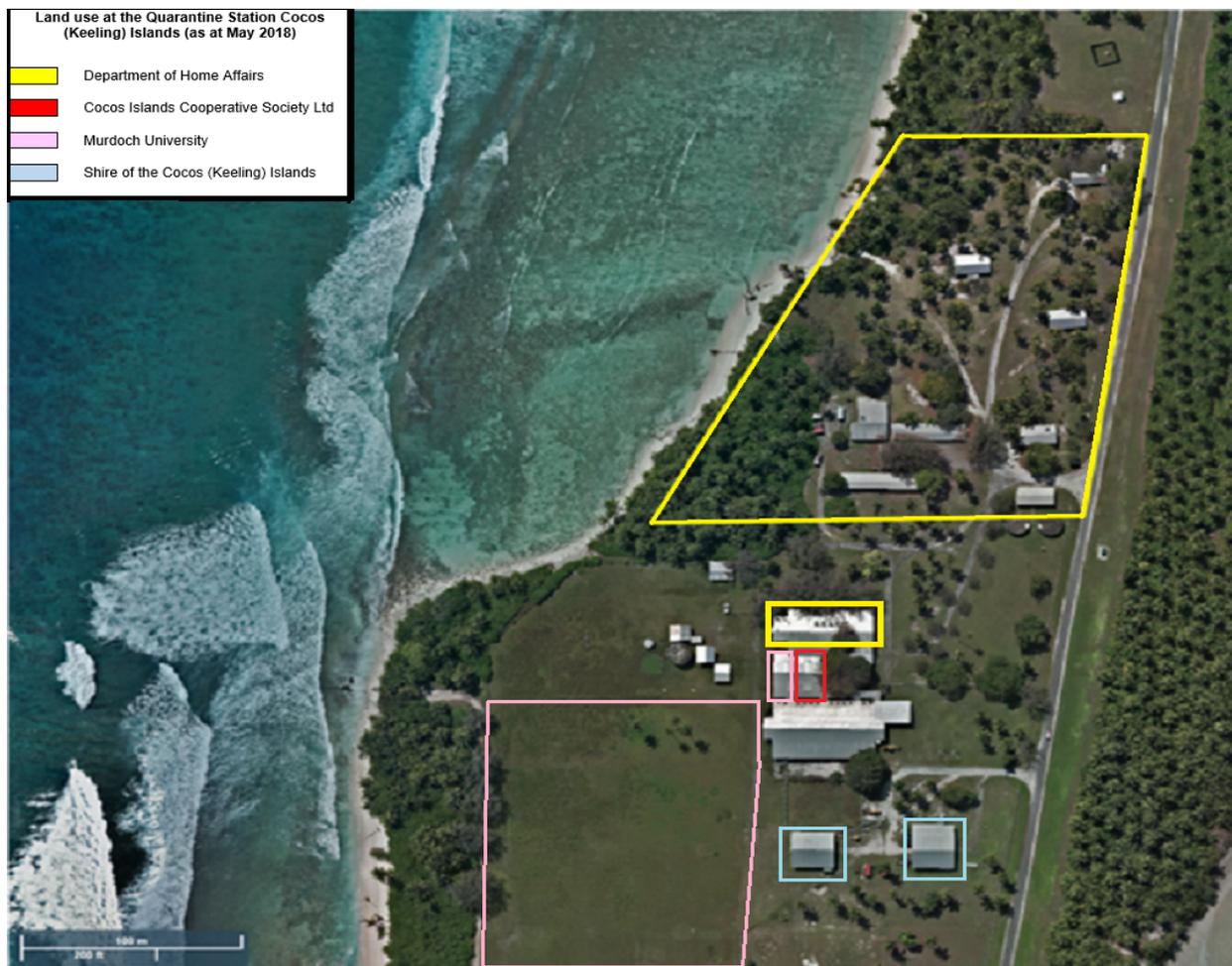
Mr SNOWDON: Thank you for that. The Q station—what's its current life as a potential detention facility, as opposed to what it could otherwise be used for, profitably, by the community?

Ms Pidgeon: At the moment, the Q station is used for three purposes—actually, four purposes. First, we allow the use of some of the workshop areas by the shire, and the shire undertakes maintenance of the facilities that are the area. Second, the Department of Home Affairs has an MOU over certain parts of that, in case it's required for any accommodation needs. Third, we have a lease with Murdoch University for them to do agricultural trials of legumes on the island. Fourth, we've just signed a lease with the Cocos cooperative for them to undertake aquaculture trials as well on the island.

Mr SNOWDON: Could you provide us with a map as to where all this is happening on the Q station, because it's the best area of land on the community, although the infrastructure, as the chair will attest to, needs to be knocked over.

Answer

Map is attached



7. Shipping (Hansard p.9)

Question

CHAIR: I'm not going to ask you to answer this question now, in the interests of time, but I'd like you to give us a written response. One of the things that we found over there, one of the serious issues, is in relation to shipping and regular supplies. They are regularly delayed, and often we're finding that shipments are actually diverted through Singapore and Malaysia and they never, ever arrive, or there are issues in relation to quarantine by them being diverted to those ports and coming back. First of all, I assume you're aware of this challenge; it's a major issue for the community. I'd be interested to know if there is anything you're looking to do to try to alleviate or address this problem.

Ms Pidgeon: We'll take that on notice.

Answer

The Australian Government supports freight services to the Indian Ocean Territories by underwriting the provision of a fortnightly airfreight flight in its contract with Virgin Australia Airlines and by subsidising the cost of port operations.

The provision of sea freight to the Indian Ocean Territories is a commercial service provided by the private sector. The Christmas Island and Cocos (Keeling) Islands Ports are owned and operated by the Commonwealth and port fees are charged below cost, at prices similar to those existing in regional mainland locations. The Australian Government does not recoup from port users the cost of its investments in maintaining and upgrading port infrastructure.

Shipping services were disrupted in 2017 due to a failure of the slew bearing in the main wharf crane on Christmas Island. The Australian Government provided funding of \$890,000 to repair the wharf crane, \$1,149,060 to cover the additional unloading costs for visits of the Zentner general cargo vessels while the wharf crane was out of service, and \$3.7 million to purchase a mobile crawler crane to provide contingency to port operations in the future. This support from the Australian Government minimised the impost of on-costs to community members and businesses for additional costs during the crane outage.