

[REDACTED]
QLD 4019

The Chairperson and/or Executive Officer
Australian Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works

Dear Sir/Madam

Re: Request for Public Comment on Macquarie Island Station Renovation

I would like to provide the following brief comment in response to your request for public comment on the proposed Macquarie Island Station Renovation. I write as a three times previous Australian Antarctic Division station leader at Macquarie Island station (2010-11, 2014-15, 2019-20), as a contract employee. However I currently have no employment ties with the AAD and I write as a private individual at this time. Further, during my periods of contract employment with the AAD, I had no direct involvement with the station modernisation project other than looking after several of the project staff during their round trip visit to the station in March 2020.

After reading the submission by the Department of Agriculture, Water and Environment, Australian Antarctic Division (Submission 1, Statement of Evidence to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works, June 2021) on the proposed station re-build, I enthusiastically endorse the plan for the preferred option 1, Life Extension. Based on my knowledge of the condition and state of the station's building infra-structure and operations, I thoroughly concur with the selection of buildings for re-build, for renovation, for removal and replacement, and for removal without replacement, and with the proposed replacement building plans. In short I consider it to be "spot on".

I have just one item on which I wish to comment, regarding with which I disagree with the proposal.

This is in relation to the building identified as Building 30 "Emergency/Ham radio hut" on the Modernisation Project diagram "Attachment 3: Concept Plans", located within the station environs on Hut Hill. This building is known colloquially as the Ham Shack, after the now little used term for amateur radio operators. It was originally constructed for the purpose of providing a venue for the pursuit of this pastime by station expeditioner enthusiasts, but has not (to my knowledge) been used for this purpose for quite a few years. I could not find any references to the fate of or plans for this building in the text of the submission, but it is depicted in red colour on that attachment diagram which indicates demolition and removal without any replacement.

At least for the duration of the period of my association with the station, it has been used for the following purposes:

a. As a location for storage of emergency supplies (non-perishable food, water, emergency warm clothing, bedding, generator and fuel) for emergency purposes, should a disaster such as a tsunami impact the station, and an emergency refuge in general. The elevation of the location on Hut Hill would protect the hut from any likely inundation resulting from a tsunami. It is relatively easily accessed from the station by a well constructed stair path. An alternative emergency/tsunami refuge was installed at a greater distance from station on Wireless Hill in 2015 using an old "apple hut" left over from the Macquarie Islands Pest Eradication Program, but the access to this location up a poorly formed and very steep pathway up Wireless Hill from station is much more difficult and would be extremely difficult to negotiate in a hurry at night. This alternative location for the emergency refuge on Wireless Hill was (in my experience) deeply unpopular with station expeditioners for exactly this reason. The apple hut on Wireless Hill is also much smaller than the Ham Shack which

could (in a real emergency and for a short period) accommodate most of the station population albeit in a crowded manner.

b. As overflow accommodation during station resupply periods. It is more than comfortable for short term accommodation purposes and has four bunks. It was generally used to accommodate helicopter aircrew in a quiet location away from station noise and bustle during this busy period, so they could get the required rest periods.

c. As an easily accessible and quiet "get away" retreat for off-duty station personnel to read, relax, or just admire the view and spot orcas in the nearby ocean below. It has been a real boon for station morale in this way.

d. As an ideal location to hold station social gatherings away from the work and accommodation buildings. This includes the traditional farewell to the resupply ship using expired emergency flares and rockets, as the newly arrived station crew celebrate the commencement of their stay on the island.

In relation to c. and d. (above), the Ham Shack has become something of fond endearment to station expeditioners now over many years, and has significantly contributed to expeditioner morale. I know that the vast majority of past expeditioners would be distressed at the thought of it disappearing.

I am unaware of what building inspections have been conducted and what consideration has been given to the state of the building in reaching the decision to remove it. I have no expertise in this area on which to base a judgement regarding the suitability of the building to be renovated and retained. However I did conduct an inspection of the Ham Shack with the then station Building Services Supervisor in 2015, who advised that he could not see any building problems that could not be easily fixed.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this submission. I feel that I am doing this not only on my behalf, but also on behalf of a very great many past and present station expeditioners who have great attachment to the "Ham Shack" and would wish it to be retained for safety, morale, and station heritage reasons.

Yours sincerely
Ivor Harris



30 June 2021.